

CARDINAL CADENCE

THE MAGAZINE OF LAMAR UNIVERSITY

VOL. 54, NO. 2 | SUMMER 2026



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| FROM THE **PRESIDENT** |



Roland Rodriguez '74 and President Jaime Taylor

In physics, we spend a lot of time talking about static friction, the initial resistance we need to overcome just to get an object to budge. Once it's moving, we can rely on Newton's First Law, which assumes that an object in motion will stay in motion.

But Newton was describing a theoretical vacuum. In the real world, there is drag.

Whether it's air resistance or mechanical friction, the middle mile of any journey is a constant battle against energy loss. To keep an object moving, you must either provide a continuous input of power or


find a way to reduce the drag. Without help, friction eventually wins, and any hard-won momentum grinds to a halt.

I see this same phenomenon in our students. We invest in and celebrate the initial force it takes to get them into college, and we cheer when they cross the finish line at graduation. But we often overlook the drag of the sophomore year—that difficult middle mile where the initial burst of energy fades, but the goal is still years away.

In this issue of *Cardinal Cadence*, you'll find a fascinating feature on Roland Rodriguez '74, a business leader and distinguished alumnus who recognizes that the "Who You Know" gap is its own kind of friction. He has changed the game for our students by championing their talent and putting his own reputation behind them. By actively working to smooth the surface between the classroom and the career, he is proving that social capital is just as important as individual skill and commitment. I think this is the fullest mission of any university: to ensure our students have what they need to turn their hard-won momentum into lifelong success.

As you read his story, I hope you'll consider how you might play a role in helping our students maintain that momentum. Some of you have the financial means to provide students with an input of power. And some of you have a professional network that can reduce the friction they encounter along the way. Our community is at its strongest when we work together to clear the path for the next generation. How might you become a part of this pipeline?

With Cardinal Pride,


Jaime R. Taylor, President



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Cardinal Cadence is published by Lamar University, a member of The Texas State University System and an affirmative action, equal opportunity educational institution.

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Design

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Circulation includes more than 94,000 copies distributed to alumni, faculty, staff and friends of Lamar University. If you have received more than one copy of this publication, please let us know.

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Cardinal Cadence (USPS 017-254) is published by Lamar University, 211 Redbird Lane, Beaumont, Texas 77710.

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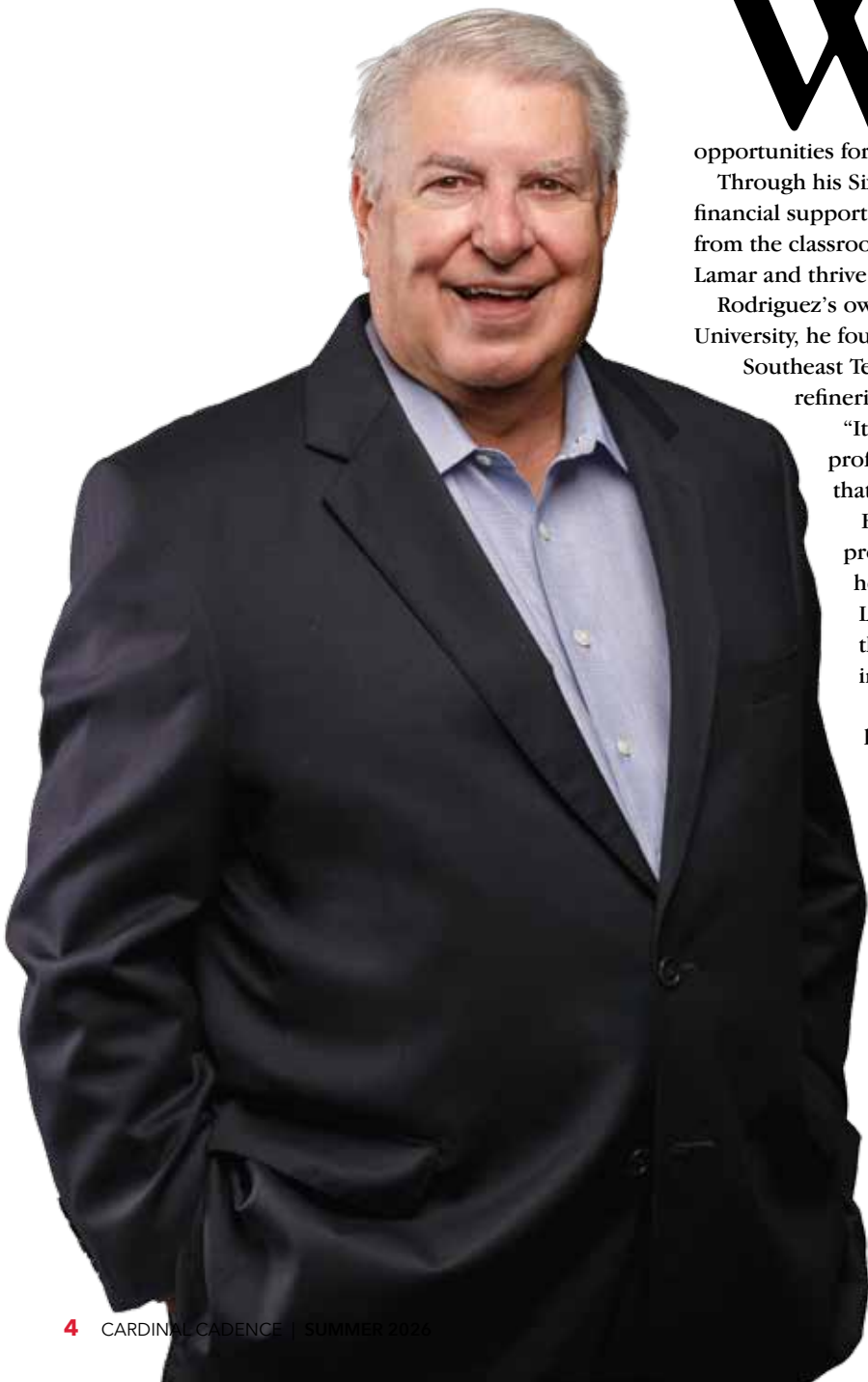
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From the barrio to the boardroom to building brighter *futures*

Roland Rodriguez and the Six Semester Scholarship Program

by BROOKE BARNETT



When asked about his career, Roland Rodriguez '74 described it as a story in three chapters: from the barrio, to the boardroom, to travels around the world. Today, he is focused on creating a legacy at Lamar University by providing the same opportunities for current and future Cardinals.

Through his Six Semester Scholarship Program, Rodriguez offers more than financial support. He builds connections and opens doors, guiding students from the classroom into careers. His vision is to equip students to succeed at Lamar and thrive long after graduation.

Rodriguez's own journey began in Bay City, Texas. When he arrived at the University, he found a campus filled with students from small towns across Southeast Texas, many from blue-collar families connected to the region's refineries.

"It was a place where I felt like I fit," he recalled. "The professors were very approachable, and I built friendships there that have endured."

He still recalls the impact of faculty members like accounting professor Harold Barlow, whose teaching and mentorship helped shape his educational journey. His experiences at LU laid the foundation for a career that would span more than four decades. That foundation quickly translated into opportunity.

"Without the education that I gained at Lamar, I wouldn't have accomplished all the things I did in my professional and personal life. It was my cornerstone," he added.

After earning his Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting, Rodriguez was recruited by KPMG, where he spent 10 years building his expertise in accounting and consulting. In 1988, he co-founded MFR and served as the firm's managing principal. Throughout his career, he advised clients across real estate, technology, manufacturing, financial services and construction sectors.

Under his leadership, MFR grew into one of the nation's largest Hispanic-owned CPA firms. He also played a key role in expanding the firm's consulting practice internationally, particularly in the energy and public sector. MFR reflected his values, employing a diverse and multilingual workforce and emphasizing opportunity and inclusion.

His professional success also allowed him and his wife, Linda, to travel extensively, exploring more than 70

countries and living in Costa Rica for over 15 years. A dedicated supporter of Lamar, Rodriguez is also a President's Circle member and was named a 2025 Distinguished Alumnus.

"We often look at our lives and think about how blessed we've been," he said. "Then the question becomes—how do we continue to pay it forward in a meaningful manner that has a life-changing impact on individuals? Being good stewards of those blessings is a large responsibility and an obligation that we take very seriously."

For Rodriguez, the answer has always pointed back to education.

"Education has the greatest multiplier effect," he said. "When you help one student, you then help one family, and ultimately, you help society."

Although he had supported the institution for years through scholarships, including the Roland Rodriguez Endowment for the College of Business and programs such as the ExxonMobil Executive in Residence Speaker Series, a pivotal moment came during a Hispanic Heritage Month event on campus in October 2019. Standing in a room filled with more than 300 students, alumni and community members, Rodriguez reflected on how much the University had changed since his time at Lamar—when it was possible to go an entire day without seeing another Hispanic student.

"It was very significant to me that the demographics have changed," he said. "It made me realize I needed to do more to make an impact and I wanted to create something that would make a difference now, not years down the road."

That realization led him to rethink how scholarship support could work. Rather than simply providing financial assistance, he believed scholarships should actively prepare students for careers. The result was the Six Semester Scholarship Program.

The program provides \$2,000 per semester for up to six semesters, beginning in a student's sophomore year, a critical time when many students face increasing financial and academic pressures. Its purpose is straightforward: remove barriers and create access to opportunity.

Today, the program supports 17 students, many of whom are first-generation college students from immigrant families. Plans are in place to expand support to 20 students. The program is already demonstrating strong results, with participants maintaining an average GPA of 3.6. But for Rodriguez, the numbers only tell part of the story.

"What I quickly realized is that financial support alone isn't enough," he explained. "Students also need mentorship, confidence and access."

To meet that need, Rodriguez took a hands-on approach. With students' permission, he reviews resumes, provides guidance and connects them directly with professionals in his network. By sharing resumes with executives across multiple industries, he has helped students secure internships and job opportunities that might otherwise have been out of reach. He focuses on teaching soft skills and giving students the confidence they need to take the first step of their careers.

"I pick up the phone," he said. "I make the calls. I connect them with people who can help them take that next step."

In recent months, Rodriguez has developed strategic partnerships with Kilgore Industries, 360 Insurance Group and Locke Solutions. These companies offer employment opportunities while also connecting students to broader industry networks, creating a growing pipeline of talent.

Equally important is the culture of support within the program itself. Rodriguez emphasizes the importance of working together as a team, encouraging students in the program to help one another and build relationships that will extend beyond their time at Lamar. He hopes the program will create a ripple effect that will continue years into the future.

"They are not just receiving help, they are learning to give it," he added. "In a few years, they'll be the ones helping the next group of students."

For students like Maria J. Cisneros, a business administration major with a concentration in business analytics, the impact is immediate and personal.

"Receiving the Roland Rodriguez Six Semester Scholarship has truly transformed my college experience," explained Cisneros. "Coming from an immigrant family, pursuing higher education can feel overwhelming. This scholarship helped make my dream of becoming the first in my family to attend college a reality. It has given me confidence, a sense of belonging, and a network of people who believe in me."

Rodriguez has dedicated part of his estate to fund the program for the foreseeable future. He feels that the true value lies in the relationships formed, the confidence built, and the opportunities created. Cisneros is already experiencing these benefits.

"Being part of this community has shown me the importance of lifting others up and staying connected to those who share similar journeys and aspirations," Cisneros added. "I believe this network will play a significant role in my professional and personal growth throughout my career."

Standing in front of students, Rodriguez often shares a simple message: "I was once sitting in the same classroom you're in now," he tells them. "And I'm living proof where the path can lead."

From the barrio, to the boardroom, to around the world, Roland Rodriguez isn't just giving back. He's building pathways forward, ensuring that the next generation of students has the support, connections and confidence to achieve their own success. *¡Todos Vamos Adelante!*, translation: *Let's all move forward!*

Rodriguez wants to thank Lamar staff, students, family and friends for making this program a reality. If you would like to participate and make a difference, please donate to the Lamar University Foundation, Attn: Six Semester Scholarship Program. Rodriguez is also asking prospective employers interested in working with the program to contact him at rrodriguez@mfrgroupinc.com.



College of Nursing and Health Professions poised to meet growing healthcare needs

by SARAH PARKER

Across the U.S., the healthcare industry is suffering from severe staffing shortages driven by an aging population, longer lifespans and increasing employee burnout—an issue that has only worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here in Southeast Texas, the need for healthcare workers is critical, but Lamar University stands ready to meet the increased demand and help fill the hundreds of vacancies hospitals and healthcare institutions are facing across the region.

In January 2026, the University launched the College of Nursing and Health Professions, an initiative that combined several existing health-related programs into a new college, forming a powerful, collaborative community dedicated to advancing health and human potential in Southeast Texas and beyond.

“Healthcare providers are always needed; it is a burden all across



the United States,” Joseph Tacy, dean of the college, said. “There is a shortage that just doesn’t seem to go away and has been here for many decades. The College of Nursing and Health Professions brings [Lamar’s health-related programs] all together under one umbrella to meet the needs of Southeast Texas.”

Lamar University Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Brett Welch said, “Because of the need in Southeast Texas, it made sense to enhance the JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing. As we started talking about it and looking at some of the programs that we should include, it lent itself to becoming its own college. Now, we have another college that will add programs to our inventory that make sense for this region.”

The college currently includes the JoAnne Gay Dishman School of Nursing; the Department of Medical Laboratory Sciences; the Department of Health and Kinesiology; the Department of Nutrition, Hospitality and Human Services; the Department of Speech and Hearing Sciences; and the Department of Social Work.

“A lot of our disciplines require our education to be interdisciplinary,” Tacy said. “We all work together. Nurses work with speech language pathology. They work with social workers. They work with nutrition and registered dietitians. When we were separated out into the different colleges, it was hard for us. We still did it, but it’s going to be so much easier now that we’re all together. There’s a lot of excitement in all the departments in the college.”

The process to establish the new college took two years of passionate work and thoughtful planning.

“We were fortunate enough to receive a little bit of funding from the state in order to make this happen,” Tacy said.

“Once that [funding] was approved, that triggered the ability to then start planning quickly. It helped that we already had a lot of departments established. I was able to quickly solidify the needed experience and the individuals to bring together the college team.”

“We have fantastic leadership with [Dean] Joe Tacy,” Welch said. “Our faculty and staff in the Dishman School of Nursing were great already, so we hit the ground running. They really understand the needs in Southeast Texas.”

According to its mission statement, the College of Nursing and Health Professions is committed to preparing future leaders through excellence in education, research, innovation and engagement and is dedicated to fostering student success, advancing health outcomes and improving the quality of life for the individuals and communities it serves.

“We’re here to create leaders, provide compassionate care to Southeast Texas and meet healthcare needs as Texas grows in population,” Tacy said. “Health professions have a high need. Most of our health professional students always get a job placement. Nursing is always a 100 percent job placement due to the shortage. As our college grows in Southeast Texas, I think it’s going to help the community thrive and succeed.”

Plans to grow the college over the next two to five years are already in place with new, high demand academic programs in development. Future additions will include a Department of Nurse Anesthesia, a Department of Occupational Therapy and a Family Psychiatric Nurse Practitioner Program.

“With the new programs, we will appeal to [prospective students] in other areas, so we can grow our recruitment efforts,” Welch said. “Lamar has also been designated a Research 2 Institution, which shows that our faculty are doing a lot with research, and that connects to this college. I think that designation makes sense with [the new programs] because those faculty are going to be doing a lot of research within the healthcare profession.”

Tacy said many of the new programs were selected in response to requests

from local hospital partners at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas, Christus Hospitals and the Medical Center of Southeast Texas, as well as other healthcare agencies in the community.

“We learn what they need, and we are responsive to provide that as the healthcare career stream for their future employees,” Tacy said. “We train our individuals locally and hope they stay here to thrive. A significant portion of graduates do stay here.”

The college aims to strengthen the University’s partnerships with local hospitals and community agencies in Jefferson and Hardin Counties and provide more opportunities for clinical training, internships and hands-on experience for students.

“We’re very fortunate here because our graduates get really good jobs,” Welch said. “Our programs are easier access, higher earnings. We are always trying to generate programs that help Southeast Texas and help the need here.”

In addition to the new programs, the College of Nursing and Health Professions will expand the Dishman School of Nursing by enhancing the existing Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program and adding a Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) to meet the crucial need for a doctoral nursing degree program in Southeast Texas.

Three DNP program track options will be offered: Nurse Executive Leadership, Nurse Educator and Nurse Anesthetists, which prepares registered nurses to become Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). Tacy said the college aims to begin accepting students into the nurse leadership and nurse educator programs in 2027 and nurse anesthetists in 2028, upon regulatory approval.

“The college is really positioned well to succeed,” Tacy said. “It’s been needed for a while. The students all seem to be thrilled, as well as the faculty. A lot has happened in a short amount of time, it’s been a positive start. When we had Cardinal View [LU’s open house], a lot of visitors said they feel like they’re home. It feels like family. That general sense really helps to propel the University forward.”



Cardinals at the helm

by JOHN ROLLINS

Known as America's energy gateway, the Sabine-Neches Waterway is home to Southeast Texas' four local ports—Port of Beaumont, Port of Orange, Port of Port Arthur and Port of Sabine Pass—all of which are led by Lamar University alumni: Chris Fisher, port director/CEO for Port of Beaumont; Lorrie Taylor, executive port director/CEO for Port of Orange; Larry Kelley, port director/CEO for Port of Port Arthur; and Mark Viator, port manager for Port of Sabine Pass.

This reality exemplifies LU's substantial impact both regionally and throughout the world. In addition to

a deep commitment to economic development, the University fosters innovation to develop a skilled workforce and enhance career opportunities in Hardin, Jefferson and Orange Counties.

With the creation of the Center for Advances in Port Management (CAPM) at Lamar University in 2015 and the recent addition of a Master of Science in Port and Terminal Management and graduate certificate programs, partnerships between LU and the port and maritime industry have grown exponentially in the last decade.

This strong emphasis on advanced education and industry relevant research opportunities has positioned the CAPM at Lamar University as a driving force in meaningful collaboration among the four Southeast Texas port directors and proud LU alumni.



Chris Fisher '88, '93
PORT OF BEAUMONT

Chris Fisher is the port director and CEO of the Port of Beaumont. Working the graveyard shift as a security guard at the Port of Beaumont in his younger years, Fisher earned his general business degree from LU in 1988.

“I thought I was going to use that to go to law school,” Fisher said. “I was accepted to St. Mary’s in San Antonio, but then the Port of Beaumont offered me an opportunity for advancement. I accepted the port’s offer, and I’m so glad that I did.”

The Port of Beaumont afforded Fisher the opportunity to go back to Lamar University to pursue an M.B.A., which he received in 1993.

“My degrees from Lamar University have been extremely helpful in managing the port’s operations,” he said. “We’re a governmental entity, but we really operate day-to-day much more like a business. We try to maximize our revenues from port operations: ships, barges, trains and trucks moving cargo through the port to and from points all over the world, generating economic impact and creating jobs.”

Fisher credits his business education from Lamar University for his success in the maritime industry, stating that the background he received helped lay the groundwork for his journey from security guard, police officer, sales rep and administrative assistant to manager of administration, then director of finance and administration and now his current role as port director.

“We strive to create jobs and generate economic development and growth in Southeast Texas,” Fisher said. “We want to provide an extreme value to the community. I think that is one major thing that we have in common with Lamar University. Having a university here in our community creates undeniable value for our area. I appreciate the education that I received at Lamar University as well. I know that I have benefitted greatly from it.”

Having served 44 years at the Port of Beaumont—23 of those as port director—Fisher is currently the longest tenured port director in Texas. With his dedicated leadership, the Port of Beaumont is well-situated as the seventh busiest port in the nation to continue meeting the needs of Southeast Texas and beyond.

“In recent years, we have expanded our educational programs as well,” he said. “We start from elementary all the way up to the college level. We want to encourage as many people as possible to think about the maritime industry and port-related jobs when they are thinking about a career. We appreciate the partnership with Lamar University in helping us make that happen.”

Lorrie (Whitley) Taylor '94
PORT OF ORANGE

Lorrie Taylor is the executive port director and CEO for the Orange County Navigation and Port District. A 1994 graduate with a B.B.A. in accounting from LU, Taylor credits the University for her technical skills in accounting, marketing and economics, and soft skills in public speaking, interviewing and organization skills.

“I was a senior at Lamar University when I got my first adult job,” Taylor said. “It was from a job posting that I saw on the bulletin board in the Galloway Business Building. It was a temporary job at ExxonMobil that helped me gain the experience that led me into my current career path.”

Taylor went on to receive a certificate as a certified public accountant, which set her apart from her peers and allowed her



to transition from career beginnings in public accounting to governmental accounting, city management and ultimately to her current role as port leader.

“The interesting thing about all of the local port leaders is that none of us set out to work at a port when we were starting our career,” she said. “I got here through accounting. Larry was a logistics manager at a warehouse. Chris started off in security. Mark was in marketing. We all had different paths that got us here, but that’s the best part about ports. They’re made up of accounting, human resources, marketing, engineering, logistics, warehouse operations, management and so much more.”

With the addition of the new Master of Science in Port and Terminal Management at Lamar University, Taylor stresses the importance of the critical skills that the program can provide for the local economy.

“There are terminals all up and down the waterway,” she said. “There are refineries. We’re a huge producer of oil and gas. This is the industry for that here in Southeast Texas. The new master’s program at LU can open up so many doors because it teaches you about logistics, transportation on the waterway, etc. I do encourage people to consider this program. The curriculum is very robust, and it’s an excellent program in state-of-the-art facilities.”

One major project of note for the Port of Orange—the North Sabine Lake Island Project—is working to restore almost 2,400 acres on the north area of Pleasure Island in Port Arthur. This project includes a collaboration with Lamar University which will provide research on local fisheries and sociological impact. This region-wide project, involving both Orange and Jefferson Counties, will create barrier islands of about 600 acres in the Sabine-Neches Waterway which benefits Orange County by deepening the waterway and creating wetland and island habitat.

Taylor says that Lamar University’s role in this partnership and others has been invaluable to the Port of Orange, especially biology professor Matthew Hoch’s work collecting technical data on erosion, fish habitat, wind and wave action, and other crucial information that will benefit the port. She looks forward to seeing the educational, sociological and recreational impacts of the project, and continuing to build on the LU collaboration for future projects.

“I believe in Lamar University so much,” she said. “My two girls both attended LU as well. My oldest daughter received a nursing degree in 2021, and she has a successful career at St. Elizabeth Hospital as an RN. My youngest daughter graduated in 2024 and has her civil engineering degree working for the Army Corps of Engineers in Port Arthur. I believe that Lamar sets you up for success.”

Larry Kelley '89, '94, '19 PORT OF PORT ARTHUR

Larry Kelley is the port director and CEO for the Port of Port Arthur. A three-time alumnus of Lamar University, he earned an undergraduate degree in business in 1989, a master’s in public



administration in 1994, and a master’s in port and terminal management from LU in 2019.

Kelley attributes his qualifications and skills attained from LU as key factors in aligning the needs of a modern port entity to directly engage in domestic and foreign commerce. “Balancing education with a career in transportation and logistics management appears to fit well at a port,” he said. “Ports hire in all disciplines—business development, administration, accounting, engineering and construction management. To that point, most of our professional staff and our legal counsel have at least one degree from Lamar University.”

The first-ever graduate of the Lamar University CAPM’s Master of Science in Port and Terminal Management program, Kelley credits the program for making him a better manager, broadening his perspective and encouraging him to utilize more analytical thinking.

“I served on the advisory committee, and the curriculum piqued my interest. The rest is history,” he said. “My compliments to the professors and professionals running the program. I was the first to graduate from the program, and the timing was interesting, pretty much starting right as Hurricane Harvey hit the area. We flooded, as many did, and I recall doing the first two semesters either from a gutted room in the house or a trailer in the front yard.”

Kelley emphasizes the importance of college students understanding the enormity of the maritime industry and the significance of job roles in the field, especially in Southeast Texas.

“It makes sense that a program like the M.S. in Port and Terminal Management would have global appeal,” he said. “Some students are already working in the maritime industry and use the program for professional development, while others are looking to enter the field. For potential students, it’s important to understand the magnitude of the maritime industry. One in four dollars of the Texas economy is tied to the maritime industry. This constitutes about \$715 billion in annual economic activity and thousands of Texas jobs.”

Despite a highly mobile and remote workforce in today's job landscape, he notes that most port careers involve onsite positions that require the physical movement of goods by marine, rail, truck and pipeline assets.

"Real work happens in Southeast Texas," Kelley said. "Ports need people to be onsite to deliver successful results, and that means living in our area. With Lamar University, Lamar State College Port Arthur, Lamar State College Orange, and Lamar Institute of Technology right here, we are able to recruit locally. I certainly didn't come up with the phrase, but I am often heard talking about ships. I speak in terms of friendships, relationships and partnerships. The area ports work well together and collaborate, and I am pleased that we all work with Lamar University."



Mark Viator '91
PORT OF SABINE PASS

Mark Viator is the port director for the Sabine Pass Port Authority. Graduating from high school in 1977, he immediately began working in the petrochemical industry the same year and eventually ended up enrolling at Lamar University.

Viator's employer at the time, Unocal, made it possible for him to obtain his bachelor's degree in speech communications from LU in 1991 while working and starting a family. "I received practical skills and experience while earning my education and degree," he said. "My employer at the time, Unocal, reimbursed me for my education, which made it nice. I was going to school during the day and working shift work at night. It wasn't easy, but eventually it all worked out."

Viator recalls his time working in public and government affairs for Jefferson Energy, where he served as a key player in the

launch of the Jefferson Energy Terminal at the Port of Beaumont. "We started with a nine-acre lease and 243 acres," he said. "Now it has millions of barrels of storage. They bring in crude by rail, and they actually export ExxonMobil gasoline and diesel to Mexico from that terminal now."

When speaking on the importance of Sabine Pass, Viator noted that the area is at the mouth of the ship channel. With three LNG facilities in the ship channel, there are significant amounts of liquid natural gas being exported to Europe and the rest of the world.

"Being at the mouth of the ship channel, there are no bridges for large ships to have to go under," Viator said. "We are seeking to see how we can better support the three LNG facilities in our ship channel: Cheniere, Golden Pass LNG and Port Arthur LNG."

That support extends to recreational activities. With its proximity to the Gulf of America and Sabine Lake, Viator expressed a desire for Sabine Pass to become a national fishing destination.

"We have the Gulf, Sabine Lake, the ship channel, and the river, but we have a marina that has a lot of fishermen who stage their boats here and leave out of here to go fishing," he said. "We are also a staging area for many shrimp boats. We seek to support the shrimpers and recreational fishermen, and a tentative plan for next door would be having a tugboat company come in as a staging area next to the port."

Viator says that the Southeast Texas ports continue to collaborate in forming alliances and partnerships.

"The four port directors and ports work very well together and will continue to do so for the benefit of our region," he said. "Collaboration allows us all to win together."

According to a 2024 report by the Texas Ports Association, the port industry supports more than 153,000 direct jobs in Texas, generating \$12.6 billion in personal income, and contributes \$17.1 billion annually in state and local tax revenues.

Handling 55% of the nation's strategic petroleum reserves, the Southeast Texas ports are a significant contributor to local commerce. Through strategic partnerships with area industry, such as ExxonMobil and Motiva—two of the largest refineries in North America—the area ports are poised to meet current transportation and trade needs.

Looking to the future, the Sabine-Neches Waterway is being deepened from 40 to 48 feet to enhance capacity, with dredge materials being used to enhance coastal resiliency and allow for the continuation of job creation, generating billions of dollars in economic activity and keeping the channel competitive in the global marketplace.

With leaders like Fisher, Taylor, Kelley and Viator at the helm, the Golden Triangle is well-positioned to continue supporting the local and national maritime industry.

Creating the Path

Former LU Ambassadors look back at the road that led to success

by CASSANDRA JENKINS



Mariah McCoy '21 B.B.A. Accounting graduated cum laude and was a recipient of the W.W. and Hilma R. Breazeale Scholarship. She now lives in Houston as an accountant for NRG Energy.

McMcoy joined the LU Ambassador program in her first semester as a college sophomore, and during her three years in the program, she said one

essential leadership skill she learned that she still uses today is adaptability.

"As Ambassadors, we worked with a wide range of individuals, from prospective students and donors to distinguished guests at University events," she said, "and

"Intentionally surround yourself with people who challenge you and inspire you to grow, because choosing the right circle can have a powerful influence on the person that you become."

each group required a different approach when it came to communication and professionalism. I feel like I learned how to quickly adjust my tone, my messaging and the level of formality depending on the audience, while still representing the school positively and professionally."

The program, she said, also taught her the importance of service and giving back to the community—a lesson that she carried into her future career decision.

McCoy said one of the reasons she chose to work at NRG Energy, one of North America's leading energy and home services companies in Houston, was its many volunteer opportunities.

"The Ambassador program spoke to me in terms of how important it is to be involved outside of my community," she said. "They gave me so much that I feel like I also needed to pave the way for others and give back when I can."

Outside of work, McCoy loves Pilates and working toward a healthy lifestyle. She is engaged to fellow former LU Ambassador and accounting partner Darien Phillips.

Darien Phillips '20 B.B.A. Accounting graduated summa cum laude and was a member of the marching and ensemble band. He is now a senior accountant at TC Energy.

Phillips was inspired to join the LU Ambassadors in his junior year after seeing students walk around in the program's signature red blazers. "That immediately stood out to me," he said. "But as I started to look into it, I saw it as a great opportunity to be a leader on campus, network and be around other like-minded individuals, and it was. I got to meet a lot of great people, including Carl Parker."

Carl Parker was a Port Arthur native who served in public service as a state senator and congressman for 32 years. He helped Lamar become elevated from a state college to a university in 1969, and 23 years later, a building on campus was dedicated in his honor.

Phillips said one of his most memorable times at Lamar was getting to meet Carl Parker during one of the alumni events staged through the Ambassador program.

Phillips said those types of events also taught him how to be effective in networking and a good communicator, skills that he practices daily as an accountant at TC Energy. He said that he is grateful for the foundation that Lamar and the Ambassador program were able to provide him.

"In my career, I've been around a lot of students and professionals from a variety of different high-profile schools," he said. "But I've been able to stand toe-to-toe with any other student because of my background at Lamar University."



"Lamar University really is a distinguished and recognizable university. I am very grateful to have been able to attend LU because it has set me up in life."



Long Nguyen '13 B.S. Chemical Engineering is an honors program graduate and served as a process engineer with Chevron Phillips after graduation. He is now a project manager for BWXT.

"You will have different challenges, but as you get through those challenges and you look back, you will be surprised at how things work out. Perseverance is a big thing, and that really becomes key as you grow."

Nguyen knew that he wanted to pursue a career in chemical engineering and follow in the footsteps of his uncle, a fellow engineer and Lamar University alumnus. However, he said, it was really his own journey at LU that solidified that he was on the right path.

"The co-ops that I did with BASF and the courses that I took during the summers with the chemical engineering department were really good for choosing what I wanted to do with my career," he said.

Nguyen immediately started working as a process engineer at Chevron Phillips after school, where he said one of the highlights of his career was being in charge of recruiting interns and new hires.

"When I was at Chevron Phillips in 2013, they had just started ramping up Lamar University engagement," he said. "Over the first few years, I got the opportunity to work in recruiting, which eventually culminated in me becoming the team lead for Lamar University recruiting—that was a great privilege."

Reminiscing on his time in college, Nguyen said he enjoyed his time as a student and as an Ambassador, where his favorite part of the experience was attending distinguished alumni events and representing the University at sporting games. He also met some of his best friends through the program.

Long is now a project engineer at BWXT, a major defense and energy supplier specializing in nuclear components, fuel and services for the U.S. government, Navy and NASA. He also serves on the advisory board for the Dan F. Smith Department of Chemical and Biomolecular Engineering at Lamar.

Jesi (Courville) Jones '13 B.S.W. Social Work was a member of the Endzone Angels, Zeta Tau Alpha Sorority and Ducks Unlimited during her time at LU. She is now the co-owner of a successful family catering business in Southeast Texas.

Jesi Courville Jones is co-owner of Courville's Catering and Special Events, a family-owned business in Southeast Texas that provides personalized catering for weddings, corporate events and parties. Jones said that she absolutely adores her job, even though it wasn't her first career choice.

Throughout her college experience, she said she changed majors several times and ultimately graduated from Lamar University with a degree in social work; however, upon reflection, she realized that her heart was always pulling her toward becoming a business owner.

One of her biggest indicators was during LU Ambassador events, where she would often gravitate toward connecting with those in the business sector. "I wanted to sit and speak with the business owners and the entrepreneurs," she said. "That should have been the writing on the wall, because now I'm not in social work anymore. As a career, I am neck deep in the business world, and that fits."

Looking back, Jones said she underestimated what the Ambassador program would do for her on a personal and professional level because it ended up leading to several open doors.

She said it also helped shape her way of thinking, teaching her not to be afraid to meet new people, to grow as a person and to be the best possible version of herself. "It really created a path for me to see how I could be successful," she said. "Who I am now was shaped through what I learned as an Ambassador and speaking with other influential alumni as well."

Jesi and her husband, Blake, have two daughters and three sons.



"Be brave and live boldly. Don't be afraid to try something new, because it just might be the thing that shapes how you move forward in your professional and personal life after Lamar."

Dream Makers

We express our deep gratitude to the alumni and friends of Lamar University who have recently established endowments or made plans to endow gifts through estate plans. These gifts encourage students to pursue a college education and support faculty in creating innovative learning environments. An endowment creates a legacy that becomes a permanent part of Lamar's history. To learn more about how you can endow a gift to Lamar, we invite you to visit our website at lamar.edu/development or to start planning a gift through your estate, visit legacy.lamar.edu. In this issue of *Cardinal Cadence*, we are honored to recognize these Dream Makers.

by Karen Nichols

Rebecca Louise (Speed) Gale '73, '79, earned a B.A. in government, which led to her career in education. She taught English at Hebert High School for several years, then, after receiving an M.Ed. in administration in 1979, she worked in Beaumont school district administration. Becky met the love of her life, Edwin Gale, in 1975, and they eventually married in 1983. Together they established the Gale Foundation with a focus on funding educational efforts, medical research, Jewish life and the needy. Becky served on the Lamar University Foundation Board of Trustees in 2013-2014 with a commitment to the success of Lamar University and the stewardship of gifts managed through the Foundation, including a generous gift from the Gale Foundation. **The Gale Foundation Scholarship Fund in Engineering** was established to help further students' success in pursuing their education.

Don '98 and Marci (Waller) '03 Coryell endowed the **Bruce and Christine Coryell Memorial Scholarship** in memory of Don's parents to pay forward the time, energy and love they shared with children, athletes and students throughout their lives. The scholarship provides funding for students majoring in an academic area within the Department of Curriculum and Instruction or Department of Education Leadership. Although born in Hollis, Okla., Donald "Bruce" Coryell '68, who was called a true Texan by his family, relocated to Galveston where he spent his childhood on the island with cousins and siblings. In 1959 he joined the Air Force and was stationed in Alaska at the height of the Cold War, constantly finding himself in the midst of an adventure. After the service, Bruce earned his Bachelor of Science in Government at Lamar State College of Technology, played semi-pro football, was the City of Beaumont's Doubles Tennis Champion, did a stint as a high school coach and another in law school. He was a self-taught artist doing portrait work on the beach for a side income while being paid to look at pretty girls. Later, his

portrait sketches were a popular feature of Helena Laboratories' training programs, where he was employed. Christine Coryell '86, '90, was born in Newark, N.J., and grew up in both New Jersey and Michigan. She and Bruce met on a New Jersey beach in 1971 and shortly after moved to Beaumont, where Christine finished her Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education at Lamar University and completed her Master of Education in 1990, all while teaching and raising their four children. Christine's work ethic was as legendary as her hospitality. A gifted teacher, she moved from elementary to university-level education. She retired from teaching as an instructor of professional pedagogy at Lamar University.

In 2016, Nicholas "Nick" '75 and Judy (Smith) Carter '79 initiated the Nick Carter Innovation Fund in Business. Over the years as they provided gifts to this fund, the College of Business presented the Carters with the potential to provide funding for students in the College of Business to participate in study abroad opportunities. The Carters agreed with the new direction for the use of their gift, and the fund was renamed the **Nick and Judy Carter International Travel Fund**. In 2025, the Carters approached Lamar to discuss the best avenue to continue providing funding for travel abroad and decided to provide an additional gift to endow the Nick and Judy Carter Endowment for International Travel. Nick and Judy each earned a Bachelor of Business Administration in Accounting. During her time at Lamar, Judy was a member of both the Phi Kappa Phi National Honor Society and Delta Sigma Pi Business Honor Society, graduating cum laude. After Lamar, she spent her time raising their two daughters and was a business owner in Lumberton. After graduating Lamar, Nick became a staff accountant with Wathen, DeShong & Juncker, and eventually was hired by one of his clients, SouthHampton Refinery, as its treasurer and controller. In 1987, he was elected president of the company. This was the beginning of a long and

illustrious career. Nick served on the Lamar University Foundation Board from 2016 through 2022 and served for a time on the College of Business Board of Advisors. Nick and Judy are recognized in the President's Circle giving society for their history of financial support to Lamar University.

John and Patty Kupper endowed the **Kupper Family Endowed Scholarship**. Their legacy statement provides their inspiration: "We moved into the area in 1979 and found a home in Nederland. Upon graduation from high school, our three children furthered their education by attending Lamar University. Each one graduated from Lamar with a different degree. My wife and I are thankful that our children advanced their education, and we feel it is important to show our appreciation of their success with this endowment. Our hope is this endowment will aid a student to find their own path to a career and a lifetime of prosperity." The scholarship is open to all majors for undergraduate and graduate students.

Tim Scoggan '83 graduated from the College of Business with a Bachelor of Business Administration in Management. In early 1984, he was considering a career change, and the Lamar placement office was very supportive and helpful, allowing him to interview with companies coming on campus to recruit for their organizations. Although he graduated the previous spring, he was able to get an interview with Pfizer. This resulted in a fulfilling career spanning 40 years in a variety of roles with Pfizer. Scoggan said, "I am forever grateful for the education I received and the opportunities that were presented to me by Lamar University." He met his wife Stephanie while they both attended Lamar. His brother and sister-in-law are also graduates of Lamar University. Tim and Stephanie endowed the **Timothy and Stephanie Scoggan Scholarship in Business** to provide funding for undergraduate and graduate students pursuing degrees in the College of Business.



In pursuit of answers to deep space questions

by ALLISON LENNARTZ

Jamie (Stafford) Karthein '17 is the kind of person you meet or read about and realize that there seems to be no end to her ability to learn and to impress others while doing it. A native of Nederland, Karthein graduated from Nederland High School in 2012. The ambition she displayed in high school as a member of the Student Council and a participant in the Academic Decathlon was only a glimpse of what she would go on to accomplish as an undergraduate and in her postgraduate studies. A recipient of the Mirabeau Presidential Scholarship, she earned her bachelor's in both chemistry and physics and graduated from LU in 2017. She went on to obtain

her Ph.D. in physics with a focus on theoretical nuclear physics from the University of Houston in 2021.

Karthein now lives in College Station where she works as a research assistant professor in the Department of Physics and Astronomy and at the Cyclotron Institute at Texas A&M University. She says the primary focus of her research is to understand “the fundamental building blocks of our world.” Much of her work consists of studying the smallest particles, quarks and gluons, that are found inside of atoms and “make up everything around us.”

Because these particles are so small, they are not invisible to the naked eye and cannot be detected even with the most powerful microscopes that exist. So Karthein works with massive and sophisticated machines called particle

accelerators, otherwise known as “atom smashers.” This kind of equipment is capable of creating atomic collisions so powerful, they result in a fluid state of matter that is known as “quark soup” or quark-gluon plasma. She says that this state of matter and the nearly 7 trillion degree Fahrenheit temperatures resulting from these reactions are believed to mimic the exact conditions of the early universe.

She uses math and computer models to further evaluate the results of these collisions and to better understand the behavior of matter under such extreme conditions and states. She identifies one of the main goals of her research as being to use the information she observes and records to connect the behavior of matter in the extreme environments as it exists in deep space. As more facilities and



“Always be curious. Always ask questions and seek answers.”

—JAMIE (STAFFORD) KARTHEIN '17

particle accelerators are made available in the future, more astrophysical data can be collected and used by Karthein and her fellow researchers to “help the scientific community piece together these jigsaw puzzles and answer lingering questions about the most extreme and exotic phases of matter in the universe.”

In her time as an undergraduate student at LU, Karthein recalls that her interest and career in scientific research began early on. She recounts her experience working with former professor Jose Andino on a project that involved computational chemistry and a carbon-neutral fuel cycle. Along with the opportunity she was given to present her research at the American Chemical Society Meeting and National Conference on Undergraduate Research in 2014 and a conversation she had with Dr. Kevin Dodson about the academic career path, these experiences propelled her toward a lifelong pursuit of learning through scientific research. For the rest of her time as a Cardinal, she remained involved in research-related projects and worked closely with Xiangyang Lei and Bogdana Bahrim, professors in Lamar’s chemistry and physics departments.

As she neared the end of her graduate studies in physics at the University of Houston, Karthein applied for and successfully obtained a research grant that enabled her to participate in a postdoctoral fellowship at the Center for Theoretical Physics at MIT. Though she left Houston early to begin her postdoctoral position, it wasn’t long before she returned to the city to speak about her research in the realm of extreme matter and the early universe’s primordial makeup at Quark Matter 2023, one of the largest international conferences for nuclear physics. She also

continued working with students from the University of Houston, mentoring and advising those who were also interested in pursuing academic careers, attending graduate school, or learning to network and lead presentations at the conferences where Karthein had previously attended or presented her own research.

For now, Karthein plans to continue working at Texas A&M where she is building her own research group and hopes to serve as an effective teacher and mentor for her students. Though she is involved in the world of theoretical physics, she is excited to be part of the nuclear science and engineering program at A&M where she says “the future of nuclear power is being forged” and believes that the work being done there will contribute to a new kind of nuclear power that can help to establish energy independence.

When asked to reflect on her time at Lamar, Karthein said, “I could never have anticipated the immense opportunities that I have had as a nuclear theorist.” Her research has led her all over the world to attend conferences and to work at some of the most well-known and prestigious institutions in the world, such as the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) and Berkeley National Lab. She’s also been able to study at places like Yale and MIT to further her education. She reflects, “Along the way, I have been able to connect with so many important mentors in physics and in science, and I am so grateful for all the guidance that they have given me over the years, especially Dr. Claudia Ratti at the University of Houston, Jaki Noronha-Hostler at the University of Illinois-Champaign, and Dr. Anna Frebel and Dr. Angeliki Diane Rigos at MIT.”

If a student is interested in or already

in the process of pursuing a STEM-related major, Karthein offers this counsel: “Always be curious. Always ask questions and seek answers.” She says that those who enjoy learning more about the universe and understanding how it works will likely find a fulfilling career in scientific research. If a student is particularly interested in the field of physics, she advises that they seek out professors at LU who work in that department to ask them more about their specific research and how they are contributing to a greater understanding of the world and how it works. “Perhaps you find your passion for research in one of these conversations,” she suggests. She also encourages students to find Dr. Tatiana Erukhimova on social media and to connect with her about the physics and engineering festival that takes place each year at Texas A&M. Erukhimova says that she helps organize and execute the festival as a way to “make physics accessible and enjoyable for everyone.” Through this event, she hopes to help students further their educational experience and strengthen their understanding of and sense of belonging to the STEM community.

For those who have found a passion for scientific research and who have decided to pursue a graduate degree to continue learning about their field of study, Karthein offers this insight: “I encourage you to never stop seeking what are truly the most interesting questions for you personally about how the universe works. That deep connection with your own contribution to fundamental science will ignite your passion for research and fuel you through graduate school and beyond.”



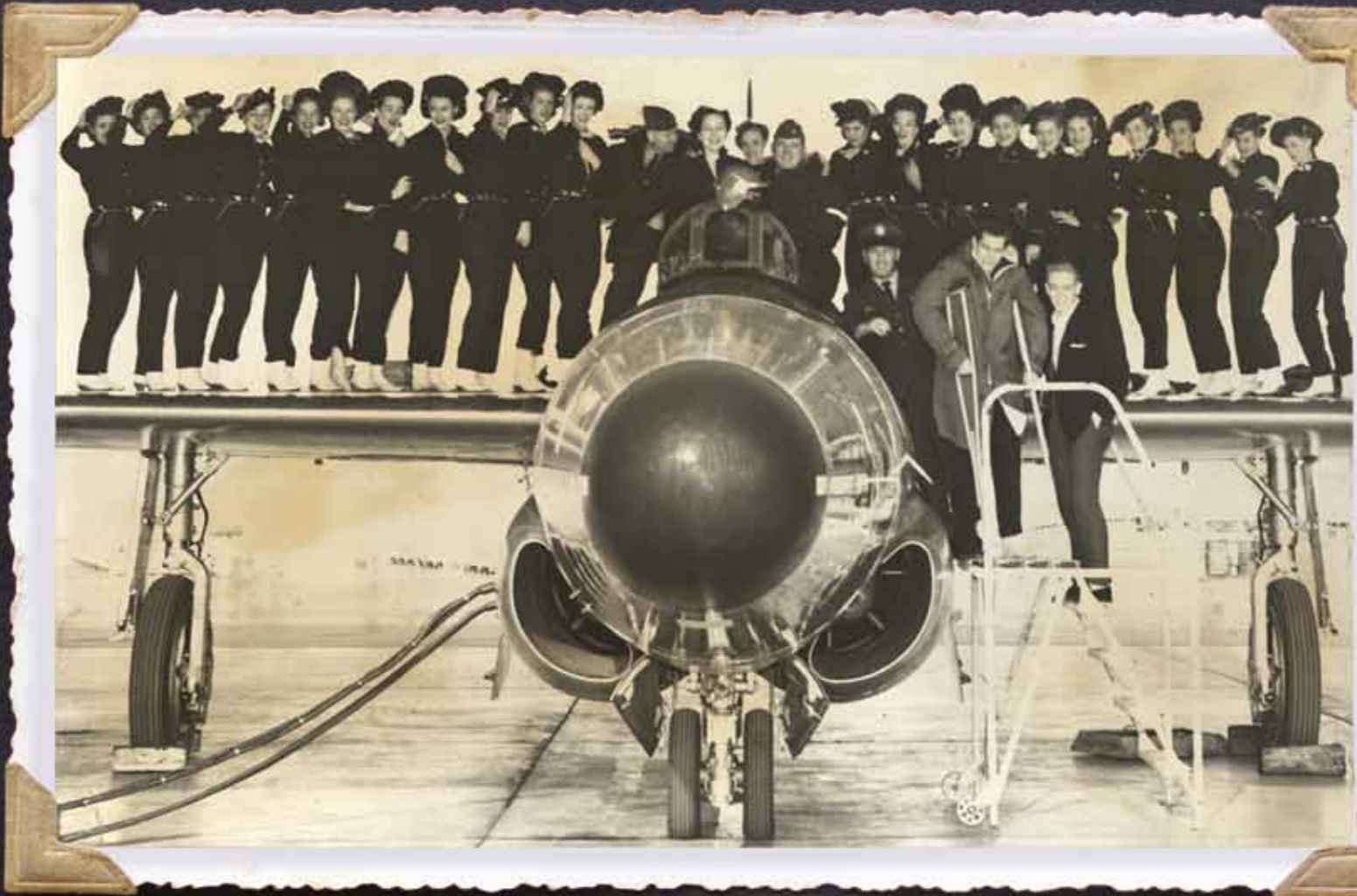
Pages from 1955 trip diary of Bette Stead '57



Ann Sharpley, Bette Stead '57, Lou Jones, Helen Gully, Connie (Rienstra) Joiner -56, 1953, Hawaii



V.B. HOSPITAL - SAN FRANCISCO



A photograph of the Melody Maids seen standing with military personnel on a wing of a Northrop F-89 Scorpion (all-weather jet fighter interceptor) at Thule Air Base in Greenland. The 74th Fighter-Interceptor Squadron of the Northeast Air Force Command was stationed at the base during their trip to the Arctic. The Melody Maids are identified from left as follows: Caryl Ann Clore, Lady Ann Chamberlain '66, Ladelle Costello, Sue Ferguson, Elizabeth Wood, Pat Fullen, Martha Kate Jordan '84, Patsy Beard '60, Bette Stead '57, Carolyn Todd, Sandra Ray '94, Eloise R. Milam (director of the Melody Maids), Lucy Ochenbach (daughter of the NEAC commander), Brenda Cascio '62, Pat Hardin '75, Pat Ferguson, Audrey Mallett, Joan Childress, Reita Rhodes '61, Glenda Walters, Connie Reinstra -56, Dean Jackson, and Hall Jean Moore. Bucky Milam appears on crutches with Jerry Conn (to his immediate right). Colonel Dick Crutcher of Beaumont was the jet squadron commander at the time of the Arctic trip.

THE MELODY MAIDS:

Making memories... and *history*

by MARILYN TENNISSEN

When it comes to entertaining the troops, the legendary Bob Hope has nothing on a group of young women from Beaumont. For 30 years the Melody Maids, under the direction of local music teacher Eloise Milam, sang their hearts out for thousands of American servicemen stationed around the world.

Milam started the program on July 4, 1942, in the midst of World War II and took more than 1,000 young women all over the world until 1972. Now their story has been brought to national attention with the release of a documentary film, *The Melody Maids Movie: Morals, Manners and Music*, by Kai Jai Conner and Doug Forrest.

Several former members and performers have connections with Lamar University. One thing Distinguished Alumna Becky (Dickson) Mason '71 remembers about her time in the Maids from 1965 to 1970 is how tiring it was for the teenage girls. "We sang at officer's clubs, several shows a day back-to-back," she said. "It was a lot of work, singing, smiling and being friendly. We were exhausted."

Mason counted herself fortunate to go on a trip to the Far East. "I can just remember in Japan we were all in our costumes and high heels, constantly on our feet doing back-to-back shows. One day Eloise said it would be okay for us to wear our low heels and we thought we had died and gone to heaven!"

Even with the hectic pace, Mason said the young ladies not only had fun but also believed in the importance of what they were doing. "We were proud to have an opportunity for people from home to say thank you to our servicemen

and bring them a taste of home," she said.

Mason held one of the earliest screenings of the Melody Maids movie at her home in Beaumont. "I was very pleased with how it turned out," she said. "I was amazed that someone was interested in our story. I'm so proud that it will be around forever!"

"We knew we were making memories, but we didn't know we were making history," Mason said.

Distinguished Alumna Bette Stead, a 1957 Lamar graduate, recalled the early days from 1952 to 1959, when the group was performing locally and raising money themselves to travel to local Army bases.

"Finally, our group was discovered by the Department of Defense, and opportunities opened to make longer tours to isolated areas," Stead said.

Toward the end of the Korean War, the young ladies visited a hospital in California where there were many badly wounded soldiers. "We were the first American girls they had seen since leaving the U.S. Many times we would hear, 'She looks just like my girl back home in Indiana' or 'I've got a daughter with hair that color.'"

It was difficult, but Stead said Milam had taught them not to ask the patients what was wrong with them, but to talk about where they were from and relate to them. "We learned to keep walking, standing, smiling, singing or chatting pleasantly no matter how we felt," she said.

Stead was part of what she called an "unusual tour" in 1954 to Greenland, Newfoundland, Baffin Island, Labrador and Iceland. "We tried to get to as many of the radar sites and weather stations as possible because these were really isolated spots," Stead said. "One





"It was such a unique time period. We went to Cuba before Castro, Haiti during the turmoil of Papa Doc. There was a dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica was still British."

—CONSTANCE (RIENSTRA) JOINER -56

night we traveled up a fjord to sing at a weather station for 36 men and a collie."

Carol Eddins, a Lamar friend and donor, was a Melody Maid from 1966 to 1971 and came to the group via her mother.

"My mom was in it," Eddins said. "She was one of the original group in 1942 that started selling war bonds. She always talked about it and wanted her daughters to have the same experience."

Eddins said the programs were fun but emphasized that the Melody Maids weren't just a choir. "We were different from some of the other groups that just sang. We entertained them. And we spent time in the hospitals. It was hard to see; their sacrifice was obvious. But we learned not to be sad, but to have compassion."

Eddins was one of the former Maids interviewed in the movie. "All of the narrators in the film were from different times in the Maids, but we all had similar stories, especially about Eloise and her leadership," she said.

"She was small in stature but knew how to command attention," Eddins said. "But I'm so happy that the film will keep her story going! It is bringing awareness of Melody Maids and the 1,500 girls across three decades who performed for 1 million service men."

Constance (Rienstra) Joiner, who attended Lamar in 1955 and 1956, was also interviewed for the film about her time in the Melody Maids, 1950 to 1956. "My mom had been friends with Eloise since high school, and I had been going to the yearly concerts since I was a little girl," she said.

Joiner was part of a tour of bases in the Caribbean.

"It was exhausting. It seemed like all we did was sing and travel. But it was such a unique time period. We went to Cuba before Castro, Haiti during the turmoil of Papa Doc. There was a dictatorship in the Dominican Republic, and Jamaica was still British," she said.

Joiner recalled her time with the Melody Maids as being "good training for life," and the skills she learned served her well in a career in public office in Colorado. "I learned how to talk to people, how to learn from them," she said. "I'm eternally grateful."

Joiner was also included in the film and said it was a fascinating experience to have the crew come to her house in Colorado.

Distinguished Alumna Patricia Adams '70, a former Lamar regent and Melody Maid from 1953 to 1966, came to the singing group on the heels of her elder sister. "My sister was a Melody Maid, so I had to be too! We knew Eloise from church, and my sister and I and one of our neighborhood friends all joined," she said.

Adams started as a Mini Maid at age 3, then rose to Junior Maid and finally full Melody Maid. She said she loved singing with a group, but not so much as a solo. "You had to be prepared because Eloise would sometimes suddenly call a girl up to sing a solo! 'Be Ready' was a real life lesson that Eloise taught us," Adams said.

She also taught the girls to respect other cultures. "She said we should embrace the culture, try to understand why they do things the way they do," Adams recalled.

Adams said she is happy to see Eloise recognized and celebrated. "The Melody Maids were the most requested entertainment for the Armed Forces, more than Bob Hope!"

Adams was one of the five former members interviewed for the movie. "It was amazing! A huge crew came to my home, and there was lighting set up and hours of filming," she said.

Although the Melody Maids were an all-girl choir, being connected to them did more than give young ladies wonderful memories. At least one young man was able to join in the adventures.

Jerry Conn, a member of the LU President's Circle, grew up with Milam's son, Bucky Milam. "Bucky was a musician, and I was a song and dance man. We had a little Vaudeville act," Conn said.

Eloise asked the boys to join the show and accompany the Maids. From 1953 to 1955, Conn traveled to military bases in California and Hawaii.

Along with Bette Stead, Conn also has clear memories of the remarkable trip to Greenland. "We went to the Arctic Circle to the Northeast Air Command; it was absolutely the middle of nowhere," he said.

One chilly night on a tugboat ride to an Air Force base, Conn said most of the group fell asleep deep in the hold of the ship, but he spent some time up on deck talking to a pretty girl. "It was my first case of 'puppy love,'" he said.

It was a mountainous area, and Conn recalled that one day "clever Bucky" decided to jump off a hill and broke his leg. "He was on crutches the rest of the trip. But he kept on going. And that's how Eloise was too, just keep on going. And she lived to be 100!"

Conn saw the Melody Maids movie and "loved it all." And he's still a song and dance man, lending his talents to retirement homes in the Austin area.

Cadence thanks Tyrrell Historical Library Digital Collections for access to its Melody Maids Collection.



Diane (Keating) and Larry Woodcox

The scholarship was the *key*

by KRISTIN ROBINSON

Diane (Keating) Woodcox's journey began in Baytown, Texas, where she graduated from high school and took her first steps into higher education at Lamar University. "It was a great experience," she recalls. "I really enjoyed the classes and the people I met." After two years, Diane transferred to Colorado State University to be closer to her extended family and fulfill a dream of studying in Colorado. She graduated from Colorado State University and set out on a three-month European adventure, traveling on just five dollars a day, a feat that took her through Iceland, the British Isles, Germany, Italy, France and beyond.

Diane's career path was as dynamic as her travels. While working at Pittsburg State University in Kansas, she earned her master's degree and met her future husband, Larry Woodcox, a fellow PSU graduate. The couple went on to raise three children, Shelly, Reed and Joseph, while Larry continued flying with the Civil Air Patrol, following his service in the Army during the Vietnam War and his transition into the automotive industry. Diane built a successful career in real estate, which provided the flexibility she needed while raising their family and teaching students at various levels. Today, she remains active as a real estate investor. She and Larry enjoy traveling, participating in church life at Faith Presbyterian, and spending time with their large and growing family, which now includes eleven

grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Diane's commitment to education runs deep. Inspired by her father's story, she often reflects on how Joe Keating received an unused scholarship from his high school that enabled him to attend the Colorado School of Mines, where he earned a degree in petroleum engineering. "That scholarship was the key to college—to his future," she said. His experience inspired memorial scholarships for her brothers, Tom and Calvin Keating, as well as Diane's own scholarships, which support juniors and seniors. "I want these to be a helping hand to those who are willing to work to improve themselves and gain a better future," she explains. "Education is the key to a better life."

For Diane, the most rewarding part of being a scholarship donor is knowing the funds are being used well. "It's good to know these funds make a difference and they are a gift that keeps on giving," she said. She also treasures the opportunity to meet the students and faculty who help bring her vision to life.

Her advice to others considering a scholarship is simple: "If you have what you need, why not share? You can gradually give until you have enough for a full scholarship. I promise you will not take your money with you in the end!" Diane believes in charity, in community and in the power of education to transform lives. Through her generosity, she's helping Lamar students open doors to brighter futures and encouraging others to do the same.

Lamar University honors former Texas House Speaker

Lamar University hosted a naming ceremony Feb. 12 to honor former speaker of the Texas House of Representatives, Dade Phelan, for his transformative contributions to the University during his tenure as a member of the Texas House. The Dade Phelan Building, formerly known as the Center for Innovation, Commercialization and Entrepreneurship, establishes the building as a landmark of significance on the Lamar University campus.

“Naming this building in honor of Former Speaker Phelan reflects the profound impact his leadership has had on Lamar University,” President Jaime Taylor said. “His commitment to access, affordability and opportunity has helped transform the educational landscape for students across Southeast Texas.”

During his years in the Texas House of Representatives, including his time as 76th Speaker of the House, Phelan served as a champion for Lamar University and the Lamar State Colleges, helping to secure tens of millions in funding to support disaster mitigation, health programs, tuition reductions, infrastructure enhancements, and energy and petrochemical initiatives in the Golden Triangle.

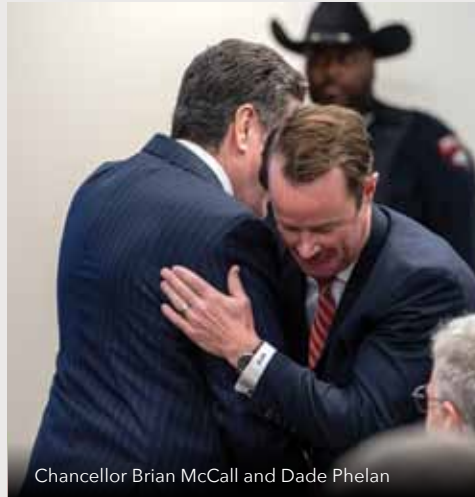
He was instrumental in providing additional parity funding—implemented into the state budget during the 2021-23 legislative sessions as a recurring biennial amount—to support institutional enhancement and ensure that Lamar University’s per-student funding approximates Texas peer institutions. “This critical support ensures that Lamar University’s current and future students have access to the same resources, the same support, and the same high-quality programs as students anywhere in the state,” Taylor said. “It is an investment that will serve generations.”

Phelan also played an integral role in securing \$45 million in capital construction assistance to help with funding for a \$90 million renovation of the Mary and John Gray Library at Lamar University. The project launched in October 2024, marking the first significant update to the building since opening its doors in 1976.

“The national recognition Lamar University continues to receive is a direct result of visionary partners like Former Speaker Phelan,” Chancellor of the Texas State University System Brian McCall said. “His advocacy has strengthened the University’s mission and expanded its ability to help students build meaningful futures.”

Serving as the first Speaker of the House from Southeast Texas in over 170 years, Phelan’s strong advocacy for higher education institutions in the Golden Triangle has left a lasting impact on the educational landscape of the region.

“This is a huge honor,” Former Speaker Phelan said. “This is something that you never expect when you run for office. I fully expect to still be involved here in Southeast Texas for many years to come.”



Chancellor Brian McCall and Dade Phelan



From left, Regina Rogers, Kim Phelan, Ja



Chancellor Brian McCall



President Jaime Taylor





ney (Nosek) Phelan '67 and Michael Phelan '67



From left, Chancellor Brian McCall, Former Speaker Dade Phelan, Vice President Juan Zabala, President Jaime Taylor



Phelan Family



Never say no to opportunity

by SHERRI SMITH

Dubai is the part people notice. From a distance, the skyline looks like the future arrived early. But for Alaric Harrell '99, Dubai isn't a postcard. It's his Tuesday.

In 2023, Harrell moved to the United Arab Emirates to become chief accounting officer for Vantage Drilling International. Now a resident of Dubai, he oversees accounting operations across a global offshore drilling fleet. It's the kind of work that requires not just technical precision, but the ability to communicate across teams, time zones and cultures.

He got there by following a simple rule: "Every time you have an opportunity, take it."

Harrell didn't learn that rule in a classroom. He learned it on the job and then built his career on saying yes to difficult assignments. While based in Houston for many years, his work as an internal auditor for Transocean required extensive travel across West Africa, South America, Asia and Europe. Those were the jobs that accelerated everything.

"You get offered something, you could say no," he said. "But if you say yes ... it works out to be a very good experience."

That willingness to put himself in the room early started at Lamar University. Just before his senior year of high school, Harrell chose to participate in a six-week minority scholars bridge program on campus. There, he met mathematics associate professor Richard "Doc" Price, now retired, and Freddie Titus, now vice president for student affairs, both of whom became pivotal mentors after he enrolled in 1994. Price would go on to teach Harrell's business calculus class, while Titus served as adviser to the LU chapter of his fraternity, Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity Inc.

Price had spent decades mentoring Black students in some of the University's most demanding programs. And as a fraternity adviser, Titus was steady, direct and not inclined to let students drift. For Harrell, that mattered. It showed him what was possible and what was expected.

He saw another version of that possibility up close. His aunt, an accountant only five years his senior, would take him to dinner when her work brought her to Beaumont. She was

already building a career that took her from Brazil to Canada, and he could see what it offered. Because she knew the language of the ledger, she could work anywhere in the world.

He started at Lamar as a general business major, but those conversations with his aunt sharpened his focus. Accounting offered something more than a job. It offered a portable skill set, one he could carry into any room, in any country. By the end of his first year, Harrell had committed to the major.

Then came Malcolm Veuleman.

On the first day of intermediate accounting, there was no introduction. No lecture. No syllabus. Just a quiz.

“We were like, ‘What are you talking about? You haven’t taught anything yet,’” Harrell recalled.

Veuleman, professor of accounting and business law, didn’t budge. “No, no, no, that’s not how it works,” he said. “You need to study on your own. You need to be prepared before you come to my class. That’s how the profession works.”

Veuleman also had a habit of testing his undergraduate students with actual CPA exam questions. When the class pushed back, he had an answer Harrell still laughs about: “CPAs don’t have to answer CPA exam questions anymore. You’re not a CPA yet.”

At the time, it felt like something to get through. Looking back, Harrell sees it differently. “Little old Lamar was actually good old Lamar,” he said. The University didn’t have the name recognition of a massive state flagship, but the professors made sure he was functionally bulletproof before he left.

Lamar gave him the technical foundation, but Harrell understood early that technical skills alone wouldn’t be enough. In energy and finance, accounting is about translation.

“The ability to communicate is the separator,” he said. “If you’re a techie accounting person, you can have a good career, but you won’t have the greatest career.” Leaders don’t want just numbers; they want to know what they mean.

After graduation, he kept saying yes, especially to the work no one else wanted, the chaotic corporate transitions that veterans usually avoid because they’re just too much work. At American Midstream, he was hired to transition an entire corporate office from Denver to Houston. It meant months of back-to-back travel and the constant risk of a high-

profile collapse.

“Most times, those things fail,” Harrell said, “and nobody wants to be a part of a failing experience.” The work required merging two companies into a single system: rebuilding the chart of accounts and aligning ledgers across teams. “It’s a huge project where you’re trying to get everybody aligned,” he said. “You end up being the little engine that keeps pushing. You’re herding cats, trying to get everyone engaged in the effort while they’re still focused on their day jobs.”

By leaning into those kinds of high-risk, high-visibility projects, Harrell built a reputation for stepping into complexity and making sense of it. That reputation eventually carried him to Dubai.

Years of traveling for business abroad have also changed Harrell’s world in very personal ways. The globe feels much smaller than it did when he was growing up in Cleveland, Texas. “My world changed when I started traveling,” he said. “You realize the truth — that despite the noise of governments, people are the same.”

Today, Harrell lives in Dubai with his wife, Berdia Alisha Sells Harrell. Their son finished his last two years of high school there and has since moved back to the U.S. for college, while their daughter attends college in Texas. The move to the UAE has also given him something he didn’t always have earlier in his career: time. He’s back on the golf course, a hobby he once set aside so that when he was home from business trips, his time belonged to his family.

For students beginning their own journeys at Lamar, Harrell’s advice is pretty straightforward: Master the technical skills because you have to. Embrace difficult assignments. But above all, don’t wait for the lecture to start. Learn to tell the story behind the work yourself.

Dubai is the part people notice. The skyline, the scale, the distance from where he started.

But for Harrell, it’s just where the work is. Turns out, he’s already in the room.



“My world changed when I started traveling. You realize the truth — that despite the noise of governments, people are the same.”

—ALARIC HARRELL '99

NICK CARTER:

To *Jeddah* and back

by ULIANA TRYLOWSKY

Recognizing the achievements of LU alumni never grows old. It's always with great pride that their successes appear on the pages of *Cadence*, and learning that Nick Carter '75, B.B.A. accounting, was recently recognized as **Citizen of the Year** by the Lumberton Chamber of Commerce is no exception.

As stated by the chamber in their newsletter, "Nick Carter's journey is a testament to his vision, hard work and dedication to both his professional endeavors and his community. His leadership not only grew companies but also helped shape industries, leaving a lasting impact on the business world and beyond." This accolade perfectly captures Carter's crowning achievement in a truly stellar career that started at Lamar University and took Carter all over the world.

After graduating in 1975, Carter started his career in Beaumont at Wathen, DeShong and Co. as an accountant. He soon moved to the corporate sector. In 1977, Carter joined South Hampton Resources in Silsbee, where he would continue to work in various roles until reaching the position of president and CEO in 1987. Over the years, Carter built South Hampton Resources into a successful corporation with more than \$300 million in revenue and 250 employees.

In 2005, Carter was named executive vice president of South Hampton's parent company, Trecora Resources. He played a central role in Trecora's listing on the NASDAQ and later the NYSE. In 2009, he was named president and CEO of Trecora Resources.

That same year, Carter was joined the board of Al Masane Al Kobra Mining Co. (AMAK) in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. From 2009 to 2017, Carter served as AMAK's chief commercial officer and traveled the world negotiating deals for the mining company.

In 2018, Trecora sold their interest in AMAK, and in 2022 Carter retired from the board of Trecora, capping his successful career of over 40 years.

Perhaps influenced by his international experiences, which showed him the importance of keeping an open mind to international business, the Carters decided to support Lamar University through the creation of a study abroad fund for business students participating in international study programs. The **Nick and Judy Carter International Travel Fund** has supported dozens of business students on short-term and long-term study abroad programs.

At subsequent meetings with their students, often over lunch at the Galloway building, the Carters always hear stories of how impactful the study abroad programs were. Many students share impressions about traveling overseas for the first time, getting their first passport and being exposed to new cultures and people. The follow-up visits with the students always leave Carter and his family feeling confident that their support is making a real difference in the students' lives.

Carter's wife, Judy (Smith) '79, and his daughters, Nikki (Carter) Smith '92 and Mandy (Carter) Ternes '03, all have B.B.A.s in accounting from Lamar University. Nikki's and Mandy's husbands, Darren and Andrew, also have business degrees from LU.

Carter has served on the College of Business Board of Advisors and as a trustee on the Lamar University Foundation Board of Trustees.





Judy and Nick Carter '75



Rafael de la Madrid wins Beck Teaching Excellence Award

LU recognized Rafael de la Madrid, chair and professor of physics, with the 2024-2025 David J. Beck

Teaching Excellence Award. The award honors faculty who demonstrate outstanding teaching or bring distinction to the University through innovative instructional methods.

De la Madrid's teaching style emphasizes active learning, with students engaging in problem-solving, demonstrations and peer discussion to develop a deeper understanding of physics. He has mentored more than 30 undergraduate students in research projects, including studies in dark matter searches, NASA reduced-gravity experiments and experimental work on droplet motion. These projects have led to six peer-reviewed publications co-authored with undergraduate students, providing hands-on research experience comparable to work at major research universities.

The David J. Beck Teaching Excellence Award carries a \$25,000 one-time prize and recognizes faculty who excel in both instruction and student mentorship, highlighting their contributions to academic success and program growth.



Texas posts top salaries, lowest debt ratios for LU engineering

State workforce data shows Lamar University engineering graduates earning among the highest first-year salaries in Texas while carrying some of the

lowest student debt loads in the state.

The latest figures come from Texas CREWS, the College Report on Employment Outcomes and Wages, a joint transparency initiative of the Texas Workforce Commission and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. The dashboard links higher education graduation records with state wage data and reports median first-year earnings for graduates, offering a more current snapshot than the federal College Scorecard, which typically tracks earnings four years after graduation.

Lamar University's engineering programs posted strong first-year earnings across multiple disciplines when focusing exclusively on bachelor of science degrees.

Mechanical engineering graduates ranked No. 1 among 22 Texas public universities in median first-year wages, reporting \$89,247. The program also posted a 3% debt-to-income ratio, the lowest in the state, with just 14% of graduates taking out student loans.

Chemical engineering ranked No. 1 in the state with a median starting salary of \$97,311, outpacing the next highest institution. The program also reported a 9% loan-to-salary ratio, the lowest in Texas.

Industrial engineering placed No. 2 statewide with a median starting salary of \$84,384, surpassing several larger institutions. Electrical engineering ranked No. 3 at \$90,756, and mechanical engineering ranked No. 4 on a separate Bachelor of Science comparison at \$82,021, reflecting year-to-year variation in median-based data. Civil engineering graduates reported a median starting salary of \$73,577, aligning with the state average.

"We are proud that LU scholarships and aid are awarded to 90% of students across campus, and we are excited to hear that Lamar has been recently voted number one in Texas for the lowest student debt," Maddie Genuardi, scholarship coordinator for the College of Engineering said. "This reflects in our engineering students especially, as so many of our scholarships are gifts from our incredible alumni to support our students through their college journey."

She added that each department within the College of Engineering also offers its own awards, with some of the most prominent funded by industry partners such as Valero, Cheniere and Entergy, helping students combine financial support with hands-on experience to set them up for early career success.

"This financial support helps students focus fully on their studies, which in turn allows them to participate in internships and co-ops and quickly enter the workforce," Genuardi said. "In turn, our students are able to pay off any minor debts they have quickly and focus on their careers, positioning them to help future students down the road."

Stanley receives Lifetime Achievement Award

Boomtown Film and Music Festival honored filmmaker O'Brien Stanley, retired professor of communication and media and current adjunct instructor, with its Lifetime Achievement Award in recognition of his decades-long contributions to filmmaking and film education in Southeast Texas. The award was presented during the festival, held Feb. 19-22 in Beaumont.

Stanley, who holds a Master of Fine Arts degree, founded LU's film program in 1998 after a conversation with then-department chair Dr. Patrick Harrigan. "Dr. Patrick Harrigan noticed I had an MFA and said, 'O'Brien, have you ever thought about teaching a film class?'" Stanley said. "And I remember thinking, this is Christmas in July."

From 1997 to 2025, Stanley taught courses in film and video production, helping grow the program from modest beginnings. "We found some old cameras under the stairs, along with a few relics from another era," he said. "They were sturdy enough you could have used them to stake down a tent. But we dusted them off, got the classes going, and built something from there."

In around 2000, Stanley joined Gordon S. Williams, Chris Castillo and Robert Fong to launch the Spindletop Film Festival after students suggested Lamar University create its own event. The foundation laid by Spindletop later led to the creation of the Boomtown Film and Music Festival in 2008, when Chris Dombrowski and his team expanded the vision for a community-centered celebration of film, music and art.

Stanley co-authored *Martian Pictures: Analyzing the Cinema of the Red Planet* in 2018 with colleagues Nicki Michalski, Lane Roth and Steven Zani, and is currently collaborating on a forthcoming book about time travel in film. He completed a short science fiction film titled "S.S. Project," which pays homage to rockets, rocket scientists, super soldiers and 1950s science fiction films.





LUNAR Team reaches new heights

The Lamar University Association of Rocketry has entered a new chapter after being accepted into the International Rocket Engineering Competition (IREC), the

largest intercollegiate rocket competition in the world. LUNAR will now compete against 107 student rocketry teams from across the U.S. and around the globe.

"We compete with other university teams to design, build and launch high-powered rockets in the 10,000-foot altitude category using commercial off-the-shelf motors," Jose Sifuentes, mechanical engineering junior, said. "This is our first year in IREC, but we spent the last two years competing in NASA's University Student Launch Initiative, which gave us a strong foundation for taking the next step."

The LUNAR team continues to grow, with 42 members this season. The organization is structured into six subteams and led by four team leads as it prepares for the demands of the new competition. "So far, the hardest part of the payload has been the size restrictions," Daniel Durbin, mechanical engineering senior, said. "That limitation affects every design decision, from the size of the tracks to the width of the batteries. We have a very finite volume, and we have to pack as much functionality into it as possible."

The competition will conclude with final launches at Spaceport Midland in Midland, Texas, from June 15 to June 20.

LU launches DBA in energy management program

For the first time in 15 years, LU will launch a new doctoral program. The Doctor of Business Administration (DBA) in Energy Management is a first of its kind program in the state of Texas and the nation.



The DBA in Energy Management is a professional doctoral degree that is designed to provide experienced business professionals and executives with advanced education and critical research skills pertaining to the energy sector. The cohort-based program can be completed in as little as two and a half years.

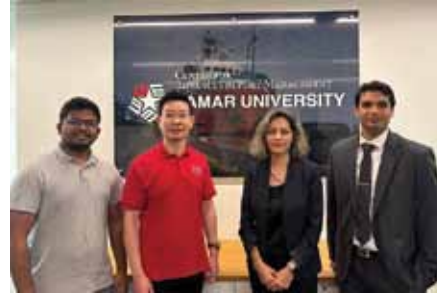
"Lamar University is thrilled to offer the new DBA in Energy Management," Joby John, dean of the College of Business, said. "This interdisciplinary, executive-level program is built for experienced professionals ready to lead in a rapidly evolving energy landscape."

The program offers flexibility that was designed with working professionals in mind, with online courses and modest tuition costs. With an interdisciplinary blend of coursework and applied research dissertation, the collaborative components of the program take a dynamic approach to business administration.

By examining business strategy and energy economics, finance, policy, AI integration, sustainability and analytics, graduates will be equipped with workforce development opportunities and industry-specific knowledge. More information is available through email dba-energy@lamar.edu or by visiting lamar.edu/dba.

Hamidi secures \$833K TxDOT award

The Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) has awarded Maryam Hamidi, associate professor of industrial and systems engineering, and her team an \$833,000 research award to lead the next phase of an artificial intelligence-driven system designed to improve vessel



monitoring and freight analysis along the Texas portion of the Gulf Intracoastal Waterway.

The team will oversee development of a system that integrates live video feeds, trade data and marine Automatic Identification System,

or AIS, data using advanced computer vision and machine learning techniques. The project builds on an earlier phase in which the Lamar research team developed a user-interface software platform for the Texas Department of Transportation to quantify and visualize vessel traffic patterns along the waterway using AIS data.

While AIS broadcasts provide vessel location and identification information, they can contain inaccuracies due to manual data entry. For example, a vessel may report a length of 200 feet, even though the combined length of the vessel and its barge tow exceeds 1,600 feet. Such discrepancies can limit the reliability of traffic assessments and freight analysis.

The new phase seeks to close those gaps by combining real-time video analysis with AIS and trade data to enhance accuracy and deliver more comprehensive insights for maritime stakeholders, including TxDOT and U.S. Coast Guard vessel traffic service units.

The award reflects Lamar University's continued investment in applied engineering research focused on infrastructure innovation, freight mobility and maritime safety along the Gulf Coast.

Exercise science team wins first

LU's team of exercise science students claimed first place at the Texas Chapter of the American College of Sports Medicine (TACSM) Student Bowl, outperforming more than 40 teams from universities across the state.



The competition, which tests students across a wide range of kinesiology topics, including cardiopulmonary physiology, biomechanics, and anatomy, featured teams from institutions such as Rice University, Baylor University, Texas A&M University and the University of Texas.

Lamar's winning team included Jenny Tu, Kayla McKinley and Ellis Prudhome, who relied on knowledge from their coursework and teamwork under pressure to secure the victory.

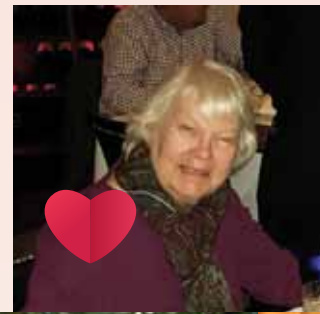
"To win, students must be prepared to answer questions from any field within kinesiology," Shannon Jordan, the team's faculty advisor said. "Our team was ready for any topic given to them. It highlights what amazing scholars they are and the hard work they put into this extracurricular endeavor."

The competition's final round required teams to wager points before seeing the last question – a high-risk move that proved decisive. "I was nervous about wagering everything, but my amazing teammates convinced me to go all in," McKinley said. "That ultimately helped us win. I learned that trusting your teammates equals winning."

McKinley was also recognized individually with the TACSM Undergraduate Scholar Award.



CARDINAL *love stories*



#matchmadeatlu

Caroline (Olson) '65 and Carl Wiggins '64

Caroline and I met as physics majors at what was then called Lamar Tech and began dating in 1962. We both received the B.S. in physics from Lamar but Caroline was the first female to do so. We were married in 1965 while graduate students in physics at Sam Houston State College where, a year later, I received the M.S. in physics. We moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico, where I began work on my physics Ph.D. at New Mexico State University. Our son Jonathon was born there in 1969. Caroline managed the ballistic camera data reduction group at the Physical Science Laboratory at NMSU for six years and, after switching science fields, completed her B.S. in biology. We moved to Albuquerque in 1973 where I began working for the BDM Corp., then a small professional science and engineering firm doing contract work mostly for the Air Force and Army.

Caroline earned her Ph.D. in medical science (physiology) at Albuquerque's University of New Mexico in 1981, becoming a research associate in the UNM Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology where she developed and operated an infertility screening and steroid radioimmunoassay laboratory that received College of American Pathologists accreditation. Later, she was a lecturer in the UNM Department of Mathematics and Statistics, teaching calculus, algebra and trigonometry to a wide range of students, including university level, adult remedial, and elementary school teachers on-site at Albuquerque area native American pueblos.

Over 32 years from 1973 as BDM grew to become BDM International with about 4,000 employees, then merging with Ford Aerospace, followed by TRW Mission Systems and finally with Northrop Grumman Mission Systems, I grew in responsibility serving as both project and line manager as well as new program developer via applied technology marketing. Most of my projects were centered around applications of nuclear, electromagnetic, optic and laser technologies to most branches of the U.S. military, including their research organizations, numerous U.S. National Labs, as well as to commercial clients such as public electric utilities and the Electric Power Research Institute. I retired from Northrop Grumman in 2005 as senior principal scientist.

We moved to Friendswood in 1992 to be close to aging parents. Caroline taught physics, mathematics and biology



ALEX



SRADER



at high schools in Webster, Pearland and League City until retiring in 2005. I unretired and, for the next seven years until retiring for good in 2012, worked, mostly remotely, for a small Maryland-based company, Sensor Concepts and Applications Inc. We celebrated our diamond wedding anniversary in September 2025.

Nia (Williams) and Anthony Alex '18

Our Cardinal Love Story is a serendipitous one! We met in October 2014 at a concert featuring the Cardinal Jazz Orchestra and the Cardinal Jazz Singers. We both are musicians. I volunteered as an alto singer in the CJS (I wasn't a student at LU but had participated in many music groups on campus over the years), and Anthony was one of the percussionists in the jazz orchestra. We caught each other's eye instantly, but it was not until August 2015 that we would get the chance to see each other again. I made a last-minute decision to volunteer again, and it was the same semester Anthony decided to join the Cardinal Jazz Singers. He introduced himself to me. We got to know each other, became friends, and the rest is history! We were married in December 2024 surrounded by loved ones and just celebrated our anniversary!



Nancy (Duhon) and Michael Webb '78

Several students from Orange County schools sat together in the Setzer Center between classes. Some of us were already friends or cousins, but all of us became friends during that time. I met my wife, Nancy, playing Spades (card game) there. We started dating in November 1976 during her first semester. After I graduated in May 1978 and took a job with Texas Eastern in Houston, we were married the following August. Nancy graduated from Texas Woman's University in 1980. We are both retired and living in The Woodlands. We celebrated our 47th anniversary last August.



Tonya (Manuel) -13 and Steven Srader '09

Tonya and I met at a social gathering at the ATO house, where I was president at the time. She likes to remind me often that crazy things can happen when you steal people's chairs (she didn't call seat back). After I graduated, she continued her education in Early Childhood Education until my job transferred us to Dallas. Now, I work with Beaumont Coca-Cola Bottling Co., and she is a teacher with West Orange Cove school district. We currently live in Port Neches with our son (6) and our 4 dogs.

Rena '19 and Timothy Stewart '19

We met and fell in love in high school, but we owe all our success to Lamar University. We had two beautiful sons and got married but decided we wanted to finish college. Almost 10 years later, we decided to enroll at Lamar and pursue our degrees together. Timothy graduated in May 2019 with a bachelor's in social work, and I graduated in December 2019 with a B.S. in nursing—2019 was a great year for the Stewarts!

Submit your Cardinal Love Story at alumni@lamar.edu



We hope you enjoy reading about former classmates. If you have news to share—a position announcement, milestone, achievement, wedding, baby—or know the whereabouts of a lost alumnus, we want to hear from you.

SEND US YOUR NEWS:

Cardinal Cadence
P.O. Box 10011
Beaumont, TX 77710

lamar.edu/alumni-update
e-mail alumni@lamar.edu
or call (409) 880-8921

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60s

Austin honored former legislator and leader of Austin's tech boom **Pike Powers** '62, B.A. government, by naming a pedestrian plaza along Waterloo Park in downtown Austin Pike Powers Plaza. His decades-long work in developing Austin as a worldwide economy focal point was pivotal in expanding Austin's technology sector. His widow, **Pam (Honea)** '68, B.S. elementary education, lives in Austin.

Northern Illinois University BookLab hosted noted author and poet **Dave Oliphant** '63, B.A. English, Nov. 2 for an evening honoring his work. He has had more than 26 books published, including volumes of poetry and non-fiction works on Texas jazz, and has won several awards, including the 2007 New York Book Festival poetry prize and the Austin Book Award. During his 30 years at The University of Texas at Austin, before his retirement in 2006, he was at different times the editor of the journal *The Library Chronicle*, coordinator of the freshman seminar program and senior lecturer in English, rhetoric and writing. He lives in Cedar Park.

70s

Stellar Bank dedicated its Delaware Banking Center in honor of founder and former chairman of CommunityBank **Pat Parsons** '71, B.B.A. accounting. The honor recognized Parsons' integrity, leadership and decades-long commitment to strengthening the financial well-being of individuals, families and businesses across Southeast Texas. He is director and vice chairman of the board of Stellar Bank and president and treasurer of Parsons Management Co. He and his wife, **Melody (O'Reilly)** '71, B.S. elementary education, who owns Grand Finale, live in Beaumont.

Retired Air Force Reserve **Col. Mark McClelland** '72, B.A. government, '77, M.A. government, who served nearly 37 years in uniform, delivered the keynote address at the 2025 Veterans Day program for Washington County

veterans. He and his wife, **Sharon (Warnascli)** '74, M.Ed. supervision, who retired as an intern supervisor for Educator Preparation Services, live in Brenham.

Alvin Adams Jr. '75, B.A. English, '85, B.A. English, is retired. He and his wife, Grace, live in Groves.

David Bost Jr. '76, B.S. chemical engineering, and **Antoinette "Toni"** '77, B.S. health and physical education, celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in August 2025 and are still supporting Big Red. David is process engineering manager for Richard, and they live in Beaumont.

Laura Stafford '77, retired from Lamar State College-Port Arthur as professor of liberal arts. She and her husband, **Ben** '81, B.S. industrial technology, '85, B.S.W. social work, who earned a doctorate in public health administration in 1996 and is vice president of workforce and continuing education for Lamar State College-Port Arthur, live in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Ed Gunderson** '78, B.S. chemical engineering, on his retirement as an environmental engineer from Huntsman in October. He and his wife, Becky, live in Magnolia.

80s

Betty Reynard '80, B.S. secondary education, '82, M.Ed. administration, concluded an 11-year tenure as president of Lamar State College-Port Arthur with her retirement in December 2025. She now serves as special advisor to the Texas State University System administration, and she and her husband, **David** '60, B.S. biology, who is a dentist with his own practice, live in Beaumont.

Gov. Greg Abbott reappointed **Cynthia (Kellam) Stinson** '80, B.S. nursing, to a two-year term on the Texas Health Services Authority Board of Directors. She is a clinical nurse specialist, certified in medical surgical nursing and is a Hartford Distinguished Geriatric Nurse Educator. She and her husband, **Fred** '75, B.S. computer science, who works for ExxonMobil Corp., live in Lumberton.

Gov. Greg Abbott has reappointed **Steven "Steve" Lucas** '82, B.B.A. finance, who is executive vice president and regional president of Stellar Bank, to the Lower Neches Valley Authority Board of Directors. He and his wife, Robin, live in Beaumont.

After a 37-year career with the Internal Revenue Service, **David Deslatte** '83, B.B.A. personnel administration, is now an enrolled agent with Hughes Noff Tax Law. He is a recipient of the Albert Gallatin Award, the U.S. Treasury's highest honorary career service award. He and his wife, **Debra (Dougharty)** '84, B.B.A. finance, live in College Station.

President Donald J. Trump nominated **Texas Sen. Brian Birdwell** '84, B.S. criminal justice, to be the assistant secretary of defense for sustainment. He and his wife, Melva, live in Granbury.

Vicki (Rachal) Thompson '84, B.S. government, rejoined FormanWatkins as an attorney and partner to focus on complex personal injury defense, toxic tort litigation and commercial disputes. She lives in Port Neches.

Sara Kelley '85, B.M. music education, is program director of North Valley Music School after retiring from a 36-year career in teaching. She lives in Columbia Falls, Mont.

Bradley Morgan '85, B.S. kinesiology, is sheriff's deputy with Jasper County Sheriff's Office. He and his wife, Brenda, live in Buna.

Orlando Alvarez '87, B.B.A. accounting, began a two-year term member in January as a board member of the National Association of Manufacturers. He is chairman and president of bp America, senior vice president of Gas and Power Trading Americas, and president and CEO of bp Energy Co. He and his wife, Kari, live in Houston.

Steven Beagle Sr. '87, B.S. kinesiology, '95, M.Ed. administration, '12, Ed.D. educational leadership, is superintendent of Nederland school district. He and his wife, Pamela, live in Nederland.

Allison (Morgan) McBride '87, B.S. communication, teaches first grade at Highland Park Elementary School

A portrait unveiling at the Jefferson County Courthouse celebrated the remarkable careers of **Judge Bob Wortham** '71, B.S. government, **Judge Gary Sanderson** '67, B.S. government, and the late Judge Jim Mehaffy, who served their communities for more than half a century, leaving an indelible mark on Jefferson County.

From left, the Honorable Baylor Wortham, Lindsay Wortham, Karen (Guzardo) Wortham '93, The Honorable Bob Wortham '71 and Zack Wortham





Larneka Lavalais '00, '02, '12, Lachelle (Lavalais) Edwards '14 and Jacoby Edwards Sr.



Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of alumni affairs and advancement services; Big Red; and Logan Morris, LU ambassador

LU Alumni Between-the-Games Basketball Party
LU alumni and friends joined in with Cardinal Athletic Fund donors for a between-the-games party to cheer on the Lady Cardinals and Cardinals as they took on the University of New Orleans Privateers Feb. 21, 2026, at the Neches Federal Credit Union Arena at the Montagne Center.



Lupe Rodriguez, Zachary Bolser, Johnathon Bolser, Kristin (Bradford) Bolser '05, '15, '17



Lance Broussard '97, Kincaid Broussard, Brianna Broussard, Rorie Young



Nate Graham, Beth Ann (Ingram) Mask '64, Amy Graham, Big Red, Jordan Williams, Elise Becker '05, '12



Sandra (Malbrough) Colbert '71, '93, and Jackie Colbert -72



Charlene Osberg, Gary Osberg '70, Patrick Gibbs -72, Gatsy (Moye) Gibbs '74, '17, Melia Manuel, Mia (Robinson) Manuel '06, Dan Shaddock '62, Sandra Shaddock



From left in back, Usha (Balaratnam) Beckman '87, Sofie (Beckman) Antill '16, Elsa (Beckman) Rooney '14, '21, with, from left, Lillian Antil, Ava Rooney and Hazel Rooney



Rayven Jefferson '15 and Alexander Reeder '17, top, with Alexia Reeder, Ryan Hadnot, and Channing Hadnot



President Jaime Taylor, First Lady Stacy Taylor, Peggy Zabala, Juan Zabala, vice president for university advancement and CEO of the LU Foundation



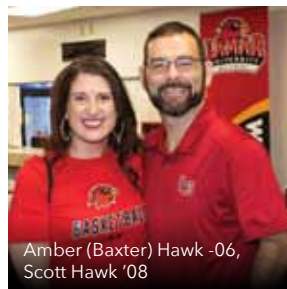
Nate Graham, Chris Graham '90 and Amy Graham



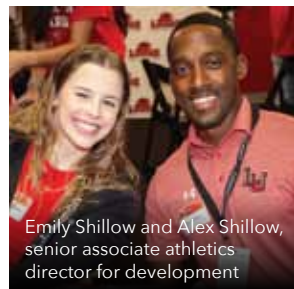
Oliver Lacy and Gwen (Johnson) Lacy '72



LU Alumni Board President Christopher Graham '90; Jordan Williams, major gifts officer; and Elise Becker '05, '12



Amber (Baxter) Hawk -06, Scott Hawk '08



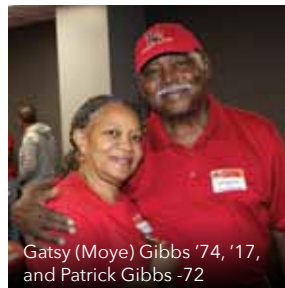
Emily Shillow and Alex Shillow, senior associate athletics director for development



Carlo Morrell, Gianni Morrell, John Morrell '07



Jeff O'Malley, vice president and athletics director, and Juan Zabala, vice president for university advancement and CEO of the LU Foundation



Gatsy (Moye) Gibbs '74, '17, and Patrick Gibbs -72



Chris Partin, Cindy (Dinkins) Partin '97, '99, Brett Weldy, Fernando del Valle Zamora, Julie (Turner) Weldy '98, Cady Weldy

in Nederland school district and was recognized by KFDM's ARC Southeast Texas. She and her husband, **Michael** '89, B.S. criminal justice, A.S. law enforcement, live in Nederland.

Bridge City High School Alumni Association named **Gina Mannino** '89, B.S. elementary education, '98, M.Ed. administration, '14, Ed.D. educational leadership, as a 2025 Alumni of the Year. She is field supervisor for the Department of Educational Leadership at Lamar University and lives in Bridge City.

90s

Treasure (Roye) Francis '91, B.S.W. social work, teaches social studies at Nederland High School. She and her husband, Cazy, live in Nederland.

John Michael Beck '92, B.S. theatre, is manager of Adventures by Disney at the Walt Disney Co. He and his spouse, Greg Takehara, live in Orlando, Fla.

The Cole Art Center at Stephen F. Austin State University is featuring a charcoal drawing, "Reed Clusters," by artist **Ken Mazzu** '92, B.F.A. studio art, in The Texas National 2026 exhibition, on view through May 31, 2026. He lives in Houston.

Randall Richard '92, B.A. history, is a special education teacher and coach at Vidor High School and was recognized by KFDM's ARC Southeast Texas. He and his wife, **Erica (Breux)** '03, B.G.S. general studies, '22, M.Ed. education technology leadership, who is a math teacher and tennis coach at Vidor High, live in Bridge City.

Janet (Yoon) Hutcheson '94, M.S. audiology/speech-language pathology, is a speech-language pathologist for Midway school district. She and her husband, Mike, live in McGregor.

Angela (Moreau) Lewis '94, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '20, M.Ed. administration, is principal of Groves Primary School and was recognized by KFDM's ARC Southeast Texas. She and her husband, Rodney, live in Groves.

Patrice (Pugh) Olson '94, B.A. criminal justice, retired from the Judge Advocate General's Corps. as a major in the Air Force. She teaches second grade at Cherry Brook Primary School in Canton Public Schools, and she and her husband, Christopher, live in Canton, Conn.

Bridge City High School Alumni Association named **The Honorable Rodney Townsend Jr.** '94, B.S. kinesiology, as a 2025 Alumni of the Year. He is judge for County Court at Law No. 2 in Orange County, and he and his wife, Amy, live in Bridge City.

Amit Ghai '96, M.E.S. engineering science, is controller of Chevron Chemical Co. He and his wife, Priti, live in Missouri City.

Veronica (Hayes) Gromada '96, B.A. political science, is a partner with Shook Hardy & Bacon and was selected as one of the 2026 Lawdragon 500 Leading Litigators in America. She lives in Houston.

"Meet a National Geographic Explorer" named **Wendy (McBryde) Lapeyrolerie** '96, B.S. psychology, '99, M.S. psychology-industrial and organizational, as a national runner-up in its essay contest. She is one of only five educators nationwide to receive the honor and teaches in Nederland school district. She and her husband, Michael, live in Vidor.

Tony Hopkins '97, B.B.A. finance, is president and owner of Four Creeks Investments and is chief financial officer of 14 companies, including Modular Plant Solutions. He is president of the Texas Association of School Boards and lives in Friendswood with his wife, Sheri.

Jared Boudreaux '98, B.B.A. marketing, is president, CEO and managing partner of Vector Controls and Automation Group and announced last year an expanded facility in Midland. He and his wife, **Malinda (Faulk)** '95, B.S. psychology, '98, M.S. psychology-community, who is a licensed professional counselor, live in Orange.

Gov. Greg Abbott appointed **Josh Lewis** '98, B.S. psychology, to the Texas Advisory Committee on Geopolitical Conflict. Lewis is senior director of network quality for Optimum and is special assistant to the adjutant general of the Texas Air National Guard. He and his wife, Nancy, live in Red Oak.

Gordon Williams '98, B.S. communication, is a member of the Fellows of the East Texas Historical Association. He is LUTV studio operations manager and adjunct instructor in the Department of Communication and Media at Lamar University. He lives in Cleveland.

Brian Mazzola '99, B.G.S. general studies, owner of Mazzola Law Firm, was named among the 2025 Texas Super Lawyers. He and his wife, Mandy, live in Beaumont.

00s

Tiffani Estrello '00, B.S. biology, is director of environmental management for Dragon Products of Modern Group. She and her spouse, Carrie, live in Brenham.

Stephanie (Welborn) Kraft -00 is an analyst for Epic. She and her husband, Joel, live in Macedon, N.Y.

Cheryl Tripplett '01, M.P.A. public administration, is executive director of the Inspire, Encourage, Achieve Program. She lives in Nederland.

Danny Chand '02, B.S. communication, spoke at the dedication of a Texas Historical Marker in downtown Beaumont honoring his grandfather, Pandit Mehar Chand, one of the first generation of Indian immigrants to earn U.S. citizenship and a small business owner. Danny earned a Ph.D. in public policy in 2013 and lives in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio.

Jenny Pomeroy '02, B.S. communication disorders, teaches at Maedgen Elementary School in Lubbock school district. She lives in Lubbock.

Blair (Price) Balsamo -03 is senior regional director of clinical outreach with Charlie Health. She and her husband, Jeremy, live in Westlake, La.

Darren Cross '03, B.B.A. management, B.B.A. marketing, owns Darren Cross Insurance Agency. He and his wife, **Traci (Yawn)** '02, B.G.S. general studies, who teaches second grade at Warren Elementary School, live in Village Mills.

Belinda (Richardson) George '03, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '08, M.Ed. administration, is director of Spindletop Gladys City Boomtown Museum. She and her husband, Melvin, live in Beaumont.

Nicole (Madden) Lewis '03, B.S. chemical engineering, is vice president of global environment, health and safety at Orion Engineered Carbons. She and her husband, **Jacob** '03, B.S. psychology, '10, M.Ed. administration, who chairs the science department at Cleveland High School, live in Kingwood.

Gov. Greg Abbott has reappointed **Caleb Spurlock** -03, who is a dentist and owner of C. Caleb Spurlock, DDS, PLLC, to the Lower Neches Valley Authority Board of Directors. He and his wife, **Kirsten (Babin)** '02, B.S. kinesiology, live in Woodville.

Jenny (Hart) Holyfield '04, B.G.S. general studies, and her husband, Clay, own Mama Jack's in Kountze, where they live.

Kayla (Marcus) White '05, B.B.A. general business, was a guest on the How Leaders Think Podcast with Kenny Large, which has been ranked in the top 10% globally. She is executive director of the Southeast Texas Nonprofit Development Center, and she and her husband, Bruce, live in Beaumont.

The Garland Club of the National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Clubs elected **Irish (Carter) Clark** '06, B.S. health education, '13, M.S. health promotion, president. She is a program specialist with the Texas Department of State Health Services, and she and her husband, Byron, live in Crandall.

Beaumont Police Department **Lt. Cody Courts** '06, B.S. psychology, graduated from the Leadership Command College Class 102 of the Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas. He lives in Lumberton.

Region 5 Education Service Center named **Shana (Henson) Green** '06, B.S. kinesiology, 2025 Elementary Teacher of the Year. She is a physical education teacher and coach at Highland Park Elementary School in Nederland school district. She and her husband, David, live in Port Neches.

Jared Quinn '06, B.B.A. management information systems, earned a master's degree in forensic science in technology crime investigations in 2012 and is a senior leader in cybersecurity for the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Cyber Division and its Syber Action Unit. He lives in Washington, D.C.

Congratulations to **Jarrod Rossi** '06, B.S. psychology, '11, M.S. psychology-community, '16, M.B.A. business administration, '25, Ed.D. educational leadership, and his wife, Emily, on the birth of their daughter, Maggie, in October 2025. They live in Beaumont.

Daylyn Turner '07, B.B.A. finance, is vice president of both JK Subaru and JK Chevrolet, which won Best New Car Dealership, Best Used Car Dealership and Best Auto Dealership Service Department in the Beaumont Enterprise's 2025 Best of the Best. He and his wife, Nikki, live in Beaumont.

Gov. Greg Abbott reappointed **Joseph Markham** '08, B.S. health education, to the Texas Radiation Advisory Board. Markham is a lieutenant with the city of Arlington Fire Department and earned a master's degree in human resources development in 2017. He and his wife, Danielle, live in Keller.

Avetta named RT Technical Solutions, owned by **Kasey (Patillo) Taylor** '08, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, '15, M.B.A. business administration, as its 2025 North America Customer of the Year in the health and safety category. She and her husband, Kenneth, live in Nederland.

Blair (Smith) Bechtel '09, B.B.A. finance, is a business lending analyst for FivePoint Credit Union. She and her husband, Sylvanus, live in Nederland.

Jeff Campbell '09, B.S. communication, is senior partnerships manager for Auctane Inc. He and his wife, Michelle, live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Haley (Dickerson) John** '09, B.S. family and consumer sciences-dietetics, '13, M.S. family and consumer sciences, on the birth of her son, Theo, in August. She is founder and managing principal of RH Capital Partners. She and her husband, Reji, live in Houston.

Eric Simmons '09, B.S. mechanical engineering, is quality assurance/quality control manager at Gulf Copper and Manufacturing Corp. He and his wife, **Brittany (Johnson)** '07, B.B.A. finance, who is an accountant with City of Port Arthur Planning, live in Beaumont.

10s

Cody DeHart '10, B.S. mechanical engineering, is vice president of engineering for GB Connections. He and his wife, **Heidi (Todd)** '08, B.S. communication, Cypress.

Control Engineering Magazine named **Prashant Ghadge** '10, M.E.S. mechanical engineering science, as one of its 2025 Engineering Leaders Under 40. He is a project engineer for Compass Energy Systems and lives in Cypress.

Michael Soniat II '10, B.S. chemistry, earned his Ph.D. in molecular biophysics

in 2016 and is an assistant professor in the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Thomas Jefferson University. He and his wife, **Julia (Moore)** '09, B.S. family and consumer sciences—fashion retailing and merchandising, who is an editorial photographer working in fashion and branding, live in Philadelphia, Penn.

Ernesto Alvarez Jr. '11, B.A. political science, is a trial lawyer at Zehl & Associates. He lives in Houston.

Correy Barnes '11, M.B.A. financial management, is senior director of private equity performance improvement for Alvarez and Marsal. He and his wife, Kamesha, live in Dallas.

Amber (Alexander) Clark '11, B.G.S. general studies, earned a doctorate in higher education and is chief of staff for the Office of the President at Lamar Institute of Technology. She and her husband, Gregory, live in Beaumont.

Thaddeaus Green '11, B.S. communication, is vice president of development and asset management for Fort Worth Housing Solutions. He and his wife, Sumalee, live in Fort Worth.

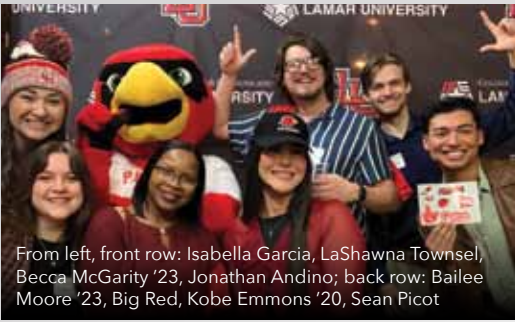
Justin Jackson '11, B.S. health education, is the environmental health manager for Beaumont Public Health. He and his wife, **Rachel** '08, B.S. family and consumer sciences—dietetics, who

is a nutritionist for city of Beaumont Public Health, live in Beaumont.

Heather (Coody) Landers '11, B.S. nursing, is a nurse with Baptist Hospital of Southeast Texas. She and her husband, James, live in Orange.

Dawn (Hebert) Roque '11, B.S. nursing, is a nurse practitioner with Dauphin Women's Center at Baptist Hospital of Southeast Texas. She and her husband, **Jorge** '17, B.S. nursing, live in Port Arthur.

Amber (Hebert) Speers '11, B.B.A. human resource management, '12, M.B.A. business administration, is director of human resources at Chevron



From left, front row: Isabella Garcia, LaShawna Townsel, Becca McGarity '23, Jonathan Andino; back row: Bailee Moore '23, Big Red, Kobe Emmons '20, Sean Picot



Tricia (Brock) Cormier '02, '09, Amy King '99, '08, Lisa (Goss) Stone '06, Jaime (Yim) Talbert '00, Jose Ochoa '04



Students Emmanuel Rodriguez and Kiera Buckner



Kara Rumsey '24, Carly Jeffcoat, Ashley Spates '26

TMEA Music Alumni Reception
LU music alumni and friends gathered while attending the TMEA Conference in San Antonio for an after-hours networking social Feb. 13 hosted by the College of Fine Arts and Communication and the Mary Morgan Moore Department of Music.



Andrew Kier '13, Tami Goss '02, '11



Carl '14, '16 and Marissa (Bell) Woodall '13



Cynthia Resendez '19, Adrian Segovia '20



Summer (White) Frasier '03, '20; Lara (Morales) Strawther '03; Golden Wright '21, dean of the College of Fine Arts and Communication



Alex Langston '17, '25, Cynthia Resendez '19, Nick Quintana '19



Paul Najera '91, Sam Moore '87

| CLASS NOTES |

Golden Circle and Class of '75 Reunion
Members of the Golden Circle and the Class of 1975 gathered Nov. 8, 2025



Sharon (Gary) Peters '71 and Carolyn (Watz) Wood '65



Bruce Belvin '70, Rita Johnson, Jocelyn West '73



Risë Lind '69, Reidar Eliassen, Sam Gray '72



Gene Arnold '61, '80, and Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61



Becky (Phelps) Guest '73, Wayne Guest '74, LU Ambassador Brianna Brottem



Debbie Middleton '74, Ginger (Cloor) Hamilton '65, Dennis White '68, Jay (Eichman) White '76



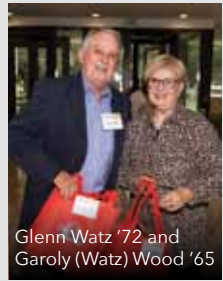
Milton Dunnam, Distinguished Alumna Myra (Pirnack) Dunnam '67, Golden Wright '21, dean, College of Fine Arts and Communication



Alice Sibert and Claud Sibert '59, '72



Vivienne McClendon, dean, Mary and John Gray Library



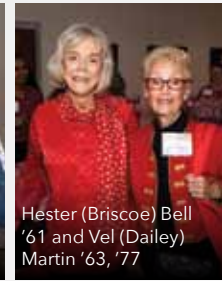
Glenn Watz '72 and Garoly (Watz) Wood '65



James Siragusa '73 and Dora Siragusa



Herman Davis and Rose (Simien) Davis '72



Hester (Briscoe) Bell '61 and Vel (Dailey) Martin '63, '77



Matt Smith and Matthews Smith '75, '79



Vicky (Scypion) DeJean '75, Jearald Brown '75, Patricia Brown



Bob Henderson '62 and Maudie (Benscoter) Henderson '71, '77



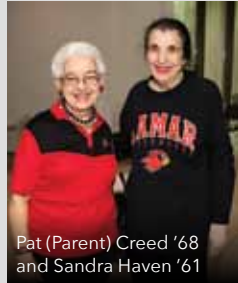
Walter Kyles '72 and Distinguished Alumnus Nick Lampson '68, '74



Jim Brammer '69, Adam Brammer



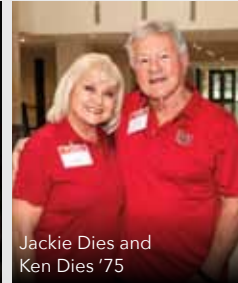
President Jaime Taylor and Karen Nichols '83



Pat (Parent) Creed '68 and Sandra Haven '61



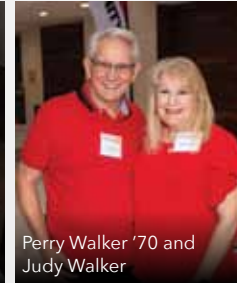
Betzy Rabuck and Bob Rabuck '66



Jackie Dies and Ken Dies '75



Tommy Premeaux '75 points out his younger self



Perry Walker '70 and Judy Walker



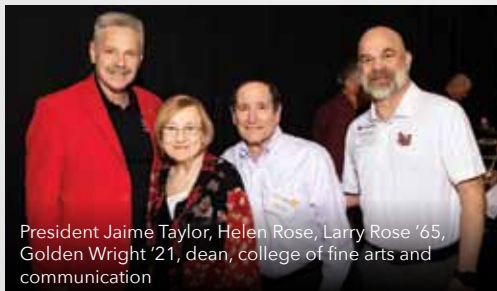
Richard How '75 and Maril (Jeffcoat) How



Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of advancement services and alumni affairs, and Linda (Forrest) Pinner '72



Linda (Paules) Caillavet '76, John Caillavet '75, Winona (King) Lindsey '75



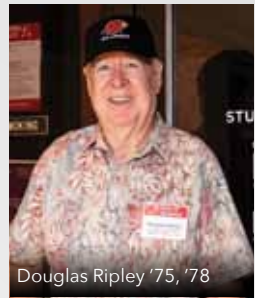
President Jaime Taylor, Helen Rose, Larry Rose '65, Golden Wright '21, dean, college of fine arts and communication



Herman Davis and LU A Grace Gause



Jordan Williams, major gifts officer; Distinguished Alumna Paula (Tate) O'Neal '69, '79, Dennis White '68, Jay (Eichman) White '76



Douglas Ripley '75, '78



Terry Barrett '68, Jim Cassel '66, LU Ambassador Rohini Rai



Mike Tardy '69, Gary Osberg '70, Dan Shaddock '62, Tommy Premeaux '75, Ken Dies '75



Roy Kreitz '65 and Claudia Kreitz



Mary Ellen Silva '75 and Vicky (Scypion) DeJean '75



Jay (Eichman) White '76, Dennis White '68, Distinguished Alumnus Nick Lampson '68, '74, Susan (Floyd) Lampson '87, '94, Distinguished Alumna Paula (Tate) O'Neal '69, '79, Gene Badgett '68



Jo Lynne (Fertitta) Morgan '75, Mary Ellen Silva '75, Richard Howe '75, Maria (Lopez) Garcia '75, Tommy Premeaux '75, Clint Lacy '75, Vicky (Scypion) DeJean '75, Jearald Brown '75, Winona (King) Lindsey '75, George Newman '75, Matthews Smith '75, '79, John Caillavet '75



Becky (Phelps) Guest '73, Wayne Guest '74, Peggy (Franklin) Sembera '74, Vicky (Scypion) DeJean '75, Lynn Sembera '74, Pete Garza '73



Brenda (Long) Jackson '68,



Ronald White '59 and Bonnie White



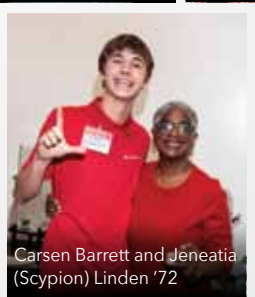
Harvey Duhaney '73, Connie Duhaney, Sandra (Malbrough) Colbert '93, Jackie Colbert '72



Scott Petkovsek '74, '81, and Luke Petkovsek '70



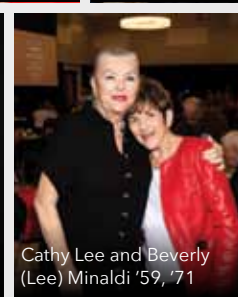
Carlyn We -69



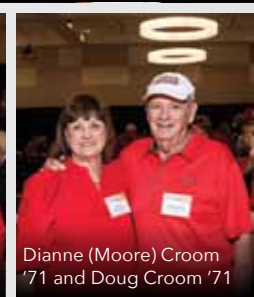
Carsen Barrett and Jeneatia (Scypion) Linden '72



Richard Valley '70



Cathy Lee and Beverly (Lee) Minaldi '59, '71



Dianne (Moore) Croom '71 and Doug Croom '71



Juan Zabala '07, vice president of university advancement and CEO of the LU Foundation; Myrtle Broussard; Shirley (Foxworth) Dougher '69



Golden Wright



Clint Lacy '75 and Brenda (Long) Jackson '68



Garth Heitshusen '60 and Doug Croom '71



Golden Wright '21, dean, college of fine arts and communication; Karen (Gary) Primeaux '63, LU Ambassador Elizabeth Drago, Pat (Parent) Creed '68, '86, '87

| CLASS NOTES |



From left, standing, Evie Clifton, coordinator of alumni affairs; Carol (Patteson) Hebert '89, 2015-2016; Bill Withers '76, '79, 1996-1997; Brad Brown '81, 2019-2020; J. Donald Warren Jr. '63, 1985-1987; Juan Zabala '07, vice president of university advancement; President Jaime Taylor; Gene Feigelson '65, 1971-1973; Clayton Lau '69, 2010-2011; Trent Devenzio '90, 2002-2003; Dan Hallmark '65, 1990-1991; Vernon Durden '04, 2013-2014; Te (Nguyen) Do '08, 2021-2022; seated, Laurie (House) Ritche '85, 1999-2000; Dr. Tamerla Chavis '83, 2004-2005; Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04, 2024-2025; Chris Graham '90, 2025-2026; Sharita Gardner '12, 2023-2024; Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01, 2022-2023; Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03 '07

Alumni Past Presidents Lunch

The Office of Alumni Affairs hosted a luncheon that brought together past presidents from the 70s to the current term for fellowship, reminiscences and future plans.



Sharita Gardner '12 and Christopher Bates '08



President Jaime Taylor with LU Ambassadors, from left, Estrella Balderas '25, Harvest Fairchild, Ryan Servantes, Madison McGuire



Distinguished Alumnus Vernon Durden '04 and Chris Graham '90



Juan Zabala '07 and Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01



Gene Feigelson '65 and Juan Zabala '07



Clayton Lau '69 and President Jaime Taylor



Lila (Creamer) Stevens '01, J. Donald Warren Jr. '63, Te (Nguyen) Do '08 and Brad Brown '81



Sharita Gardner '12, Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of alumni affairs, Te (Nguyen) Do '08



Christopher Bates '08 and Gene Feigelson '65



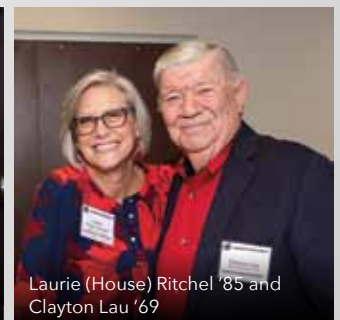
Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04; Sharita Gardner '12



Evie Clifton and Distinguished Alumnus Tamerla Chavis '83



Trent Devenzio '90 and Carol (Patteson) Hebert '89, '90



Laurie (House) Ritche '85 and Clayton Lau '69

Phillips Chemical Co. and is a board member for Habitat for Humanity of Montgomery County. She and her husband, Douglas, live in Spring.

Patrick Williams '11, M.E. chemical engineering, is the process safety and training superintendent for CVR Energy Inc. He lives in Ardmore, Okla.

Lisa Brennan '12, B.F.A. studio art, '24, B.S. accounting, is the administration assistant for the Department of Art and Design at Lamar University. She lives in Beaumont.

Sylvia Sanchez Garza '12, M.Ed. administration, owns B.I.C. Development, co-owns Garco Ranch Communities and is vice president of the board of directors of South Texas school district. She is second vice president of the Texas Association of School Boards. She and her husband, Ricardo, live in Edinburg.

Ben Pousson '12, B.B.A. accounting, '16, M.S. accounting, is chief financial officer of the Nelda C. and H.J. Lutzer Stark Foundation. He and his wife, Erica, live in Orange.

The Art Studio Inc. hosted a solo exhibition of the artwork of **Allison Reho** '12, B.F.A. studio art, a collection of sculptures titled "There are no Nests in the Pines." She lives in Beaumont.

Wesley Smith '12, B.S. communication, is the pre-professionals program advisor in the College of Arts and Sciences at Lamar University. He and his wife, **Aubrey** '16, B.S. family and consumer sciences—family studies, live in Orange.

Congratulations to **Ashley Walker-Harris** '12, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, on her marriage to Barry Burns Jr. She is an autism specialist for Port Arthur school district, and they live in Beaumont.

Samuel Bradley '13, M.S. kinesiology, is associate head track and field coach and head cross country coach at the Radford University. He has been named the Big South Coach of the Year twice and lives in Christiansburg, Va.

Megan (Fournerat) Mistic '13, B.G.S. general studies, is a hospice liaison for Amedisys. She and her husband, **Nathan** '13, B.B.A. general business, B.B.A. entrepreneurship, B.B.A. management, '21 M.B.A. business administration, who is technical account manager for AWC Inc., live in Nederland.

Congratulations to **Hillary (Landry)** '13, B.S. nursing, and **Toby Nash** '02, B.B.A. accounting, on the birth of their son in March. Toby is an associate attorney with Germer & Gertz, and Hillary is a perioperative clinical nurse manager with Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. They live in Beaumont.

Danielle (Christian) Termin '13, M.Ed. school counseling, is director of auxiliary and prime senior services for Paris Regional Health. She and her husband, Timothy, live in Paris.

Congratulations to **Jennifer Torry** '13, B.A. French, B.A. English, on her marriage to Brendan Alexander in July 2025. She is literacy coach, English teacher and soccer head coach for St. George's Senior School. They live in Vancouver, B.C.

Lanny Williams '13, M.Ed. administration, is director of athletics for Waco school district. He and his wife, Vicki, live in Leander.

Deneitra (Harris) Ham '14, M.Ed. administration, is a member of the board of directors of After Breast Cancer Diagnosis, founder of Breast Assure, and co-founder and CEO of Urban Youth Development. She and her husband, Darwin, live in Milwaukee, Wis.

Sarah Irwin '14, B.S. political science, '16, M.P.A. public administration, is an associate attorney with Clausewitz Reyes Attorneys at Law and was recognized in the business/corporate and nonprofit organization categories of the 2025 Texas Super Lawyers and Rising Star list. She and her spouse, **Alora Berry** '13, B.S. communication disorders, who is co-founder of and dog trainer for Lead the Way K9 Training, live in Spring Branch.

Dayton school district Sports Hall of Fame honored **Chance McCormack** '14, B.G.S. general studies, as a new member for his contributions to Dayton football. He was a two-time All-District lineman for the Broncos and a key member of one of the best offensive lines in Dayton history. At LU, he anchored an offensive line that helped power one of the top-ranked offenses in the nation, finishing fifth overall. He is an operator at Valero Refinery, and he and his wife, Crystal, live in Dayton.

Aurelia Payne '14, B.S. health education, is program manager at Harris County Public Health. She lives in Katy.

The Roysse City High School Athletic Hall of Fame Committee selected **Brock Wempa** '14, B.S. criminal justice, as a 2025 Athletic Hall of Fame inductee. He was a three-time Associated Press All-State selection and a First-Team All-State honoree. He is operations manager for Highway Transport Logistics Inc. and lives in Roysse City.

Congratulations to **Scott** '14, B.A. history, and **Kelly (Rivera) Williams** '12, B.S. communication, on the birth of their son, River. Scott is senior client computing specialist at Lamar University, and Kelly is an academic advising team lead in the Undergraduate Advising Center at Lamar. They live in Beaumont.

Thomas Davis '15, B.B.A. advertising communication, B.B.A. marketing, is a marketing and communications associate for the BBB of Southeast Texas. He and his spouse, **Josh** '11, B.S. criminal justice, B.S. sociology, '15, M.B.A. experiential entrepreneurship, '19, M.P.A. public administration, who is vice president of development for the

eastern region of Legacy Community Health, live in Beaumont.

Holden Gray '15, B.S. computer science, '21, M.S. management information systems, is a senior computing coordinator at the University of Houston—Clear Lake. He and his wife, Kristian, live in Houston.

Congratulations to **Miranda (Shipman)** '15, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '18, M.Ed. administration, on her marriage to Ryan Guidry in October 2025. She teaches at Port Neches Intermediate School, and they live in Nederland.

Dr. Prasun Mandal '15, B.S. chemistry, is a doctor of osteopathic medicine for Lakeview Clinic. He lives in Beaumont.

Vaughn Ogrzydziak '15, B.S. chemical engineering, is a reliability engineer at Roehm America. He lives in Bay City.

Dr. Lauren (Stafford) Richardson '15, B.S. biology, achieved a professional milestone of publishing 100 works within 10 years of beginning her scientific career as a graduate student, including works on cancer research, fetal membrane biology and preterm birth. She and her husband, Alex, live in La Marque.

Mariah Rutherford '15, B.S. psychology, is volunteer coordinator for CASA of Southeast Texas. She and her life partner, **Holly Pryor** '15, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, who is varsity volleyball coach for Bob Hope School, live in Groves.

Corynn (Boudreaux) Stokes '15, B.S. health education, '19, M.S. speech-language pathology, is a speech-language pathologist at Theraspace in Lumberton. She and her husband, Jason, live in Lumberton.

Heather (Barclay) Wise '15, B.S. nursing, is a palliative care registered nurse at Christus St. Elizabeth Hospital. She and her husband, Warren, live in Lumberton.

Texas Association of Secondary School Principals recognized principal of Comal school district Spring Branch Middle School **Sally Bratton** '16, M.Ed. administration, as a 2025, Region 20 Outstanding Middle School Principal of the Year. She and her husband, Carl, live in Bulverde.

Congratulations to **Aja (Baise)** '16, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, '19, M.Ed. administration, on her marriage to Randolph Brooks in November 2025. She teaches at Challenger Elementary School in Pearland school district, and they live in Pearland.

Michael Dock Jr. '16, M.M., music, is director of bands for Carthage High School. He lives in Nacogdoches.

Ivone Garcia '16, B.B.A. accounting, '17, M.S. accounting, is audit and assurance senior manager at Deloitte. She lives in Channelview.

Maci (Reeves) Morris '16, B.S. biology, teaches science at Nederland High School, and her husband **Levi Morris Jr.** '16, B.S. mathematics, '23, M.P.A. public administration, teaches math at Nederland High School. They have two children and live in Groves.

Congratulations to **Andy (Hernandez-Iglesias)** '16, B.S. family and consumer sciences—nutrition, dietetics, hospitality, and **Omar Rodriguez** '15, B.S. civil engineering, on the birth of their daughter, Amaya, in September 2025. Omar is professional staff with Tolunay-Wong Engineers Inc., and they live in Beaumont.

Kimberly (Hayhurst) Spicer '16, Ed.D. educational leadership, is superintendent of Wylie school district. She and her husband, Sidney, live in Sachse.

Julian Stevens '16, B.B.A. marketing, honors his late mother through his fashion line *Dos Corazones* and recently hosted a fashion show and participated in a pop-up shop in New York during Fashion Week. He lives in Beaumont.

Aliyah Thomas '16, B.S. communication, released an album titled "Confessions of The Songstress." She is a benefits communication specialist for Insperity and owns A-List Sweets & Treats. She lives in Missouri City.

Congratulations to **Kelli (Creel)** '17, B.S. biology, on her marriage to Aristides Armas-Villalba in October. She is a dentist with Imagine Children's Dentistry and Orthodontics. They live in San Antonio.

Congratulations to **Cherie (Pope)** '17, B.B.A. management information systems, and **Zac Eubanks** '15, B.B.A. finance, on the birth of their twins, Lily and Sage, in September. They live in Dickinson.

Ricci (Sanchez) Garcia '17, B.S. sociology, is an elementary paraprofessional in Ganado school district. She and her husband, Robert, live in El Campo.

Aaron Lavergne '17, B.S. mechanical engineering, is project manager at Graves Mechanical. He and his wife, **Mahalia (Payne)** '16, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, live in Houston.

Lynn Nguyen '17, B.B.A. accounting, '19, M.B.A. business administration, M.S. accounting, is senior SEC reporting analyst at CenterPoint Energy. She lives in Katy.

Alyssa (Stevens) Overbey '17, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, earned a master's degree in higher education administration and is academic program manager at University of North Texas Health College of Public Health. She and her husband, Thomas, live in Arlington.

The Art Studio Inc. hosted a solo exhibition of the artwork of **Cameron Uresti** '17, B.F.A. graphic design, titled "Coping Mechanisms." He is a

CLASS NOTES

graphic designer for marketing and communications at Lamar University and lives in Beaumont.

Rust College named **Barry Wellington** '17, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, as men's head basketball coach. He lives in Memphis, Tenn.

Kimberly Boase '18, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '23, Au.D. audiology, completed the Advanced Audiology Course at the Thomas Balkany Institute for Cochlear Implant Training. She lives in Houston.

Celine Do '18, B.B.A. management information systems, '22, M.B.A. business administration, is a human resources generalist at Baptist Hospitals of Southeast Texas. She lives in Nederland.

Robyn Dwyer '18, B.S. chemical engineering, is a process engineer for Motiva Enterprises. She lives in Nederland.

Christa (Goos) Gaspard '18, M.Ed. special education, is director of the Office of Accessibility Services at McNeese State University. She and her husband, Steven, live in Lake Charles.

Congratulations to 2nd **Lt. Dillon Nicholson** '18, B.A. modern languages, and **Marly Nicholson** '18, B.S. graphic design, on the birth of their son, Lincoln, in November. Dillon is an infantry officer with the Army, and they live in Fulshear.

Carly Olliff '18, B.S. communication-advertising, '21, M.B.A. business administration, is an employee benefits specialist at Hilb Group. She lives in Houston.

Congratulations to **Kaylie (Smith)** '18, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, on her marriage to John Sanchez in October

2025. She is clerk for the Jefferson County Tax Department, and she and her husband, John, live in Port Neches.

The Texas Association of Secondary School Principals named Liberty Hill High School Associate Principal **Megan Sauber** '18, M.Ed. school counseling, as Region 13 Outstanding Assistant Principal of the Year. She lives in Leander.

Congratulations to **Shelby Smylie** '18, B.S. chemical engineering, and her husband, **Calvin** '20, B.S. industrial engineering, on the birth of their son, Michael. Shelby is FCC contact engineer for ExxonMobil Corp. and they live in Lumberton.

Congratulations to **Savanna (Porter)** '18, B.B.A. marketing, and **Mason Vizena** '17, B.B.A. marketing, on the birth of their son, Jack, in September. Mason is an account manager at Scallion Controls Inc., and Savanna is an inside sales representative for United Rentals. They live in Nederland.

Tristen Anding '19, B.A. political science, earned his law degree in 2024 and is an associate attorney at Ferguson Law Firm. He lives in Port Arthur.

Victoria LaFleur '19, B.B.A. accounting, B.B.A. finance, is an attorney with The Ferguson Law Firm. She lives in Port Neches.

Kaledia Ouattara '19, M.E. chemical engineering, received a doctorate in chemistry in 2014 and is a field service engineer with Agilent. He and his wife, Bailly, live in Wesley Chapel, Fla.

Hailey (Ferguson) Thompson '19, B.S. speech and hearing sciences, '21, M.S. speech-language pathology, is a speech-language pathologist at Theraspace in

Lumberton. She and her husband, Jake, live in Lumberton.

20s

Cody Banach '20, B.B.A. finance, B.B.A. economics, claimed his biggest professional win at the 2025 Waterloo Open. He and his wife, **Katelyn (Potter)** '19, B.B.A. management, live in League City.

Jenna (Smith) Berg '20, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse at Baptist Hospital in the ICU/CVICU and earned her nurse practitioner master's degree in 2025. She and her husband, **Peyton** '20, B.G.S. general studies, live in Vidor.

Shelby (Brashers) Berlinger '20, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and her husband, Brenden, welcomed their son Tate into their family last August. She teaches in Port Neches-Groves school district, and they live in Bridge City.

Rachel Cassorla '20, B.S. industrial engineering, is a senior industrial engineer with Burlington Stores. She lives in Cherry Hill, N.J.

Edward Doan '20, B.S. chemical engineering, wrote an article titled "Why Ideological Diversity Still Matters" for the Harvard student publication, THE HARBUS. He and his wife, **Madison (Marino)** '19, B.B.A. economics, B.B.A. finance, who is a policy analyst for The Heritage Foundation, live in Boston, Mass.

Congratulations to **Sarah (Truncali)** '20, B.S. mathematics, and **Gavin Gilbreath** '20, B.S. electrical engineering, on the birth of their son, Jace. Sarah teaches math at Orangefield High School, and

Gavin is a control system engineer at Motiva Enterprises. They live in Orange.

Hayden Henslee '20, B.S. biology, earned his veterinarian degree in 2025 and is a veterinarian with Spurlock Road Veterinary Clinic. He lives in Nederland.

Natalie (Spradley) Holmes '20, interdisciplinary studies, '25, M.Ed. administration, teaches English at Vidor High School. She and her husband, Steven, live in Vidor.

Former LU Ambassador **Kaily (Garcia) House** '20, has authored The Call of the Wind, the first in a series. She is content editor for Mometrix Test Preparation, and her husband, **Nathan** '21, B.S. chemical engineering, is a process engineer for Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co. They live in Lumberton.

Marc Lerma '20, B.B.A. finance, B.B.A. economics, is director of merger and acquisitions and corporate strategy at WWEX Group. He and his wife, **Kaylie (Overstreet)** '22, B.S. nursing, live in Houston.

Congratulations to **Mandy (Richards)** '20, B.A.A.S. applied arts and sciences, and **Andy Martin** '01, B.B.A. general business, on their marriage in October. She teaches pre-K at Sabine Pass School, and he is account manager and producer at Martin Insurance Agency. They live in Nederland.

Carli (Woolly) Pope '20, B.B.A. marketing, and her husband, Kilby, welcomed their son Myles to their family last August. Carli is a marketing assistant with Streetz Dance Convention and Competition. They live in Beaumont.

Kelsey (Tran) '20 and her husband Antonio Vega were married in May 2025. The live in Nederland.

A Dinner and Fall Alumni Advisory Board Meeting

Members of the Lamar University Alumni Advisory Board met on September 11, 2025 for their Fall business meeting and social at the Dauphin Complex.



Shawn Webb '03, '12, Terry Savoy-Hadley '95, Gwendolyn (Johnson) Lacy '72



Donta Miller '18, Sam Blanda '08, James "J" Bienvenu '11, Juan Zabala '07, vice president for university advancement, CEO, Lamar University Foundation, Inc.



Dennis Moncla '89, '94, and Jeff Darby '88



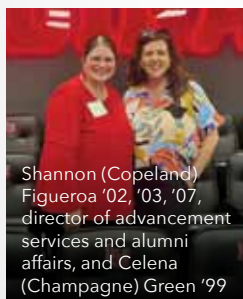
Richard Valley '70



Emily (Everett) Allen '98, '04, and Chris Graham '90



Danielle (Hudson) Sutton '08 and Usha (Balaratnam) Beckman '87



Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, director of advancement services and alumni affairs, and Celena (Champagne) Green '99



Lance Broussard '97



Shawn Webb '03, '12, Hetty (Green) Brown '79, Vanlam Nguyen '01, '03, Thomas Davis '15

Kirkland Banks '21, B.S. physical education–teacher education, plays third base for the Idaho Falls Chukars, an independent baseball team of the Pioneer League, an MLB Partner League. He lives in Lake Charles, La.

Brandon Baumgardner '21, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, is a patrol division officer with the Houston Police Department. He and his wife, **Candace (Hebert)** '20, B.S. exercise science and fitness management, live in Conroe. She is an occupational therapist at Texas Children's Hospital.

Andrea Figueroa '21, B.S.W. social work, earned a master's degree in social work in 2025 and is a mental health professional at Metrocare Services. She lives in Austin.

Oris Granger '21, B.S. industrial engineering, '23, M.E.M. engineering management, is supervisor and manufacturing engineer at Palm Bay Site Intel and Cyber, Maritime Programs, of L3Harris Technologies. He lives in Palm Bay, Fla.

Brandon Hubbard '21, Ed.D. educational leadership, is superintendent of Chilton school district. He and his wife, LaLinda, live in Lorena.

Tyler Huff '21, B.A. history, is a coach at Nederland High School. He and his wife, **Kelsey (Schwartz)** '19, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, who teaches third grade at Langham Elementary School in Nederland school district, live in Port Neches.

K.J. Johnson II '21, B.S. kinesiology, '25, M.Ed. administration, is head boys basketball coach for Hamshire-Fannett High School. He lives in Beaumont.

Kevin Richardson '21, M.Ed. educational leadership, is principal of Happy High School. He and his wife, Darcie, live in Canyon.

Jennifer (Sweet) Roble '21, M.Ed. digital learning and leading, '24, Ed.D. educational leadership, is an emergent technology specialist for Punahou School. She and her husband, Craig, live in La Jolla, Calif.

Shane Roderick '21, B.M. music education, is director of percussion at University of Texas Permian Basin. He lives in Port Neches.

Blake Smith '21, B.S. civil engineering, is an account manager and reliability consultant with Cascade Reliability Engineering. He and his wife, Brittney, live in Port Neches.

Kourtney (Johnson) Villegas '21, B.G.S. general studies, is district communication coordinator for Meadow school district. She and her husband, C.J., live in Lubbock.

Luke Wallis '21, B.B.A. finance, B.B.A. management, '22, M.B.A. business administration, M.S. management information systems, is finance manager of Cook Compression OEM-Houston/US Aftermarket/Bearings Plus at Dover Precision Components. He lives in Hockley.

Macy (Edgerly) '21, B.S. nursing, married Dylan Young in September 2025. She is a registered nurse with St. Elizabeth Hospital, and they live in Orange.

Congratulations to **Ali Hamza** '22, B.S. political science, on passing the bar exam. He is an associate with Ahmad, Zavitsanos & Mensing and lives in Port Neches.

Libbie (LeJeune) '22, B.B.A. human resource management, '13 M.B.A. business administration, and Preston Hughes on the birth of their daughter, Lyla. Libbie is a human resources assistant and event coordinator for the city of Groves. They live in Port Neches.

Ian Kennard '22, B.S. mechanical engineering, is a manufacturing engineer for Daily Thermetrics. He lives in Tomball.

Undrafted lineman **Drew Moss** -22 identified as San Francisco 49ers' most outstanding rookie against the Raiders last season. He lives in Kerens.

Landon Richard '22, B.B.A. human resource management, '23, M.B.A. leadership, is public and government affairs advisor at ExxonMobil Baytown. He lives in Beaumont.

Ashley (Poole) Whisneant '22, B.S. criminal justice, teaches math in Silsbee school district. She lives in Silsbee.

Kenya Anderson '23, B.S. nursing, is a nurse at Christus Southeast Texas–St. Elizabeth. She lives in Orange.

Elyse (Mahaffey) Bauerle '23, M.Ed. administration, teaches English at Edna High School. She and her husband, Tyler, live in Edna.

Sabria Dean '23, B.S. psychology, joined Esteghial of the Iranian Women's Basketball Premier League in September. She returned home in March due to the unrest in the country and lives in Mineola.

Ambassador Etiquette Dinner

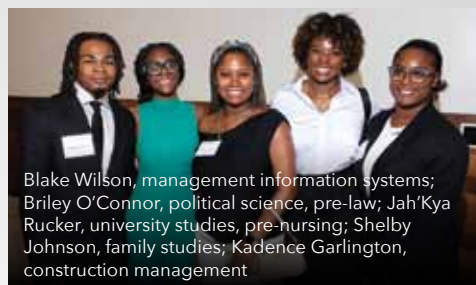
Ambassadors learned formal table manners, professional dining protocols and social graces during an etiquette dinner Sept. 30 organized by the Office of Alumni Affairs.



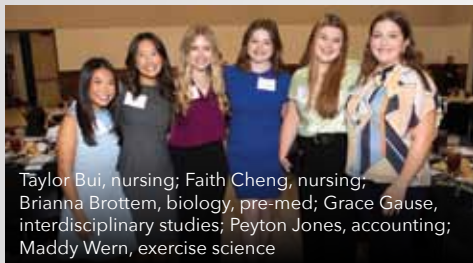
Brianna Brottem, biology, pre-med; Faith Cheng, nursing; Jenny Tu, exercise science; Soleil Tran, accounting; Tilisa Thibodeau, dean, Reaud Honors College; Peyton Lee, chemical engineering



Alyson Vu, biochemistry, pre-med; Estrella Balderas, biochemistry, pre-dental; Kathy Nguyen, computer science, electrical engineering



Blake Wilson, management information systems; Briley O'Connor, political science, pre-law; Jah'Kya Rucker, university studies, pre-nursing; Shelby Johnson, family studies; Kadence Garlington, construction management



Taylor Bui, nursing; Faith Cheng, nursing; Brianna Brottem, biology, pre-med; Grace Gause, interdisciplinary studies; Peyton Jones, accounting; Maddy Wern, exercise science



Harvest Fairchild, speech and hearing sciences; Kayla Smith, speech and hearing sciences; Kadence Garlington, construction management; Kathy Nguyen, computer science and engineering; Brian Jackson Jr., electrical engineering



Mohamed Irhabi, biology; Logan Morris, chemical engineering, pre-med; Bilal Alani, chemistry, pre-med; Saad Mohammed, biology, pre-med; Cristian Arevelo, civil engineering; Sergio Mendez, biology, pre-med



Grace Roy, biology, pre-med; Mari Cardenas, exercise science, physical therapy; Bilal Alani, chemistry, pre-med; Campbell Spell, marketing



Jasmine Guillory, university studies, pre-nursing; Daniella Lopez-Rosa, management



Jenny Tu, exercise science; Mallary Warner, general business

A Dinner and Conversation

LU brought together accomplished alumni, current students, and faculty and staff members for an evening of engaging conversation over dinner Jan. 29, 2026. The exclusive event, hosted by the Office of Alumni Affairs, aims to provide students with valuable insights into the professional landscapes of their chosen fields.



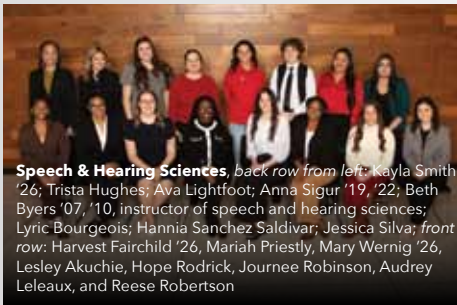
Hosts from left: Amy Lovoi '13, president and CEO, Greater Beaumont Chamber of Commerce; Luke Nguyen '22, operations engineer, INEOS Olefins and Polymers; Troy Jones '89, diagnostic and interventional radiologist, Coastal Imaging Associates; Darren Lewis '01, lead software development and IT operations engineer, Raymond James Financial; Kelly (Montagne) Meadows '87, director of health services, Little Cypress-Mauriceville school district; school nurse, Little Cypress Intermediate School; Shaqueena (Parker) Nobles '13, '24, emergency management coordinator, City of Beaumont; Anna Sigur '19, '22, speech-language pathologist, early childhood intervention, Spindletop Center; and Alfredo Jimenez Sanchez '20, principal of Tyrrell Elementary School in Port Arthur school district



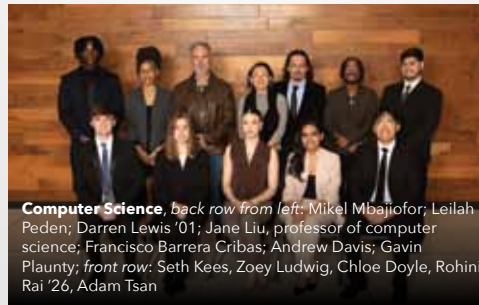
Business, back row from left: Michael Vu; Mario Miguel; Matthew Arc; Amy Lovoi '13, '15; Komal S. Karani, chair and professor of management and marketing; Mallary Warner '26; Blake Wilson; **front row:** Daniella Lopez-Rosa, Kadence Garlington, Gabriella Smith, Elizabeth Drago '26, Alleigh Rio, Clara Schreck '26



Nursing, back row from left: Toni-Marie Johnson; Natalie Bean; Joe Tacy, dean, College of Nursing and Health Professions, Kelly (Montagne) Meadows '87; Tanzina Iffat; Jasmine Guillory; Noah Bodzioch; **front row:** Sarah (Schreck) Engleman, Diana Rodriguez Ramirez, Jayla Spearman, Maddy Wernig, Faith Cheng



Speech & Hearing Sciences, back row from left: Kayla Smith '26; Trista Hughes; Ava Lightfoot; Anna Sigur '19, '22; Beth Byers '07, '10, instructor of speech and hearing sciences; Lyric Bourgeois; Hannia Sanchez Saldivar; Jessica Silva; **front row:** Harvest Fairchild '26, Mariah Priestly, Mary Wernig '26, Lesley Akuchie, Hope Rodrick, Journee Robinson, Audrey Leleaux, and Reese Robertson



Computer Science, back row from left: Mikel Mbajiofor; Leilah Peden; Darren Lewis '01; Jane Liu, professor of computer science; Francisco Barrera Cribas; Andrew Davis; Gavin Plaunty; **front row:** Seth Kees, Zoey Ludwig, Chloe Doyle, Rohini Rai '26, Adam Tsan



Pre-Medicine, back row from left: Sergio Mendez '26; Riley Trent; Saad Mohammed; Karim Shaaban; Troy Jones '89; Ajay Srivastava, professor and chair of the Biology Department; Madison McConnell; Mari Cardenas; Bilal Alani '26; Mohamed Irhabi; **front row:** Kelly Dougharty, Brianna Brottem, Elizabeth Diaz Arreola, Jenny Tu, Ashton Rainey, Taylor Bui



Leadership, back row from left: Shelby Johnson; Amy Schwartz; Bradley Mayer, chair and professor of leadership studies; Shaqueena (Parker) Nobles '13, '24; Kendall McCardell; Briley O'Connor; Ryan Servantes; **front row:** Zoe Bienvenu, Alondra Mendiola, Lea Walker, Macy Ostten, Sneha Jobby



Engineering, back row from left: Dennis Tran; Cristian Arevalo; Jacob Smith; Luke Nguyen '22; Clayton Jeffryes, chair and associate professor of chemical engineering; Logan Morris; Landon Paulino; Kaden Smith; **front row:** Teague Antley, Kathy Nguyen, Alyssa Harper, Morgan Fernandez, Will Naas, Jud Ripper



Education, back row from left: Gabrielle Sensat; Emma Grace Nelson; Carsen Barrett; J. Elizabeth Casey, associate professor and chair of curriculum and instruction; Alfredo Jimenez Sanchez '20; Madison McGuire; Blaine Isom; **front row:** Amber Floyd, Grace Gause, Mackenzie Howell, Alyvia Ott, Abby Ott

Samantha Hargrave '23, B.B.A. marketing, is the student life coordinator at Lamar Institute of Technology. She lives in Nederland.

Chasity (Alexander) Jefferson '23, human resource management, '24, M.B.A. business administration, is a human resource assistant with Caddo Community Action Agency. She and her husband, Dan, live in Shreveport, La.

Alicia Lawson '23, M.Ed. clinical mental health counseling, is a licensed professional counselor-associate and owns Rooted and Rising Counseling

specializing in burnout and anxiety, trauma and emotional wounds, and rebuilding self-trust. She and her husband, Ernie, live in Fort Worth.

Amber Martinez '23, B.B.A. accounting, '25, M.S. professional accounting, is an accounting and finance development program senior financial analyst at Walmart Corporate on the health and wellness finance team. She lives in Vidor.

Lumberton school district named career and technical education teacher **Cole McKinstry** '23, B.S. communication film

studies, Newcomer of the Year for 2024-2025. He lives in Lumberton.

Jessica (Reedy) Potter '23, B.B.A. general business, '25, M.B.A. accounting, is an accounts payable specialist with G&G Enterprises Construction Corp. She and her husband, James, live in Lumberton.

Anthony Sanders '23, M.S. criminal justice, is police chief of Fort Bend school district. He and his wife, Cheryl, live in Corpus Christi.

Jennifer Tsan '23, B.S. computer science, is lead FPGA firmware engineer

at Wabtec Corp. She lives in Erie, Penn.

Genesis Perez Choz '24, B.S.W. social work, earned her master's degree in social work in 2025 and is a case manager for Texas Family Care Network. She lives in Beaumont.

Julie (Meisner) Garza '24, M.Ed. school counseling, is school counselor for Ganado Elementary School. She lives in Garwood.

Kristen Herrin '24, B.S. university studies multidisciplinary, is the communities and school site coordinator for Highland Park

Alumni Community Service

A group of big-hearted and hard-working alumni gathered at the Southeast Texas Food Bank for a day of community service Dec. 6, 2025.



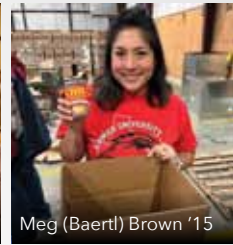
Front row from left: Brandi (Anderson) Lopez '20, Zoya Adnan, Mellow (Seale) Tatmon '88, '09, Sharita Gardner '12, Octovia Brown-Reed '90, '97, Traci (Maines) Warner '01, Mallary Warner '26, Lachelle (Lavalais) Edwards '14, Zainab Mariyah '22, Meg (Baertl) Brown '15, Mari Cardenas, Clara Schreck '26, Chassity George '16; back row from left: Nicole Littlefield, Emma Ferguson, Bella Ferguson, Misty (Rountree) Ferguson '05, Denita Jones '21, Ednesha Cook '15, Lee Ann (Dean) Garth '79, Riley Trent, Daylyn Turner '07, Gabe Crosby '01, '03, '08, Shannon (Copeland) Figueroa '02, '03, '07, Bob Webb, Angelia Robinson '24, Debbie Hendrix, Jada Thrash '26, Alyssa Harper



Angelica Robinson '24



Daylyn Turner '07, Lee Ann (Dean) Garth '79



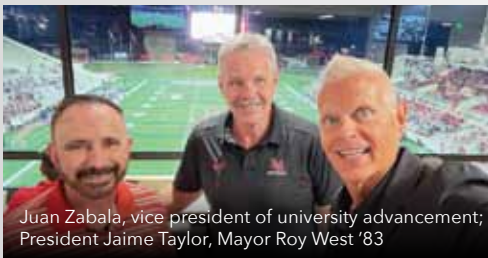
Meg (Baertl) Brown '15



Octavia Brown-Reed '90, '97

Cardinal Football Reception

Alumni watched the Cardinals take on the Central Arkansas Bears from the Cheryl and Phillip Fuller President's Suite Sept. 27, 2025



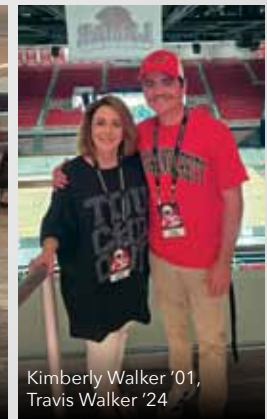
Juan Zabala, vice president of university advancement; President Jaime Taylor, Mayor Roy West '83



Nicole Turner; Daylyn Turner '07; Jon Joby, dean, College of Business; Terry Hadley '95



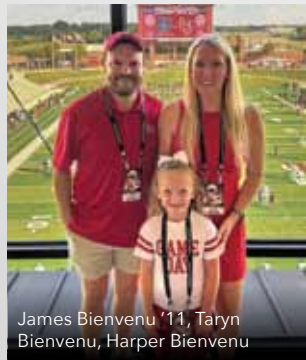
Jacoby Edwards, Lachelle Edwards '14, Terry Hadley '95, Tatiana Morales Owen '93



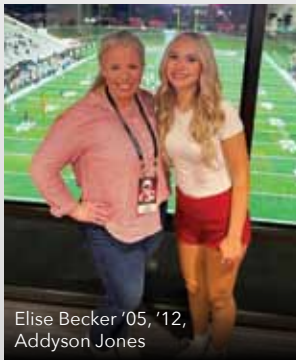
Kimberly Walker '01, Travis Walker '24



Becky Fussell '82



James Bienvenu '11, Taryn Bienvenu, Harper Bienvenu



Elise Becker '05, '12, Addyson Jones



Josh Davis '11, '15, '19 and Thomas Davis '15

Elementary School in Nederland school district. She lives in Kountze.

Md "Saif" Al Imran '24, M.E.S. electrical engineering science, is a commercial support engineer and south Texas lead at Siemens Smart Infrastructure USA. He and his wife, Asmany, live in Edinburg.

Vavah Kamasa-Quashie '24, B.S. psychology, is an administrative associate for allied health at Lamar Institute of Technology. She lives in Beaumont.

Congratulations to **Julie (Pack) McMahon '24**, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, and her husband, Ty, on the birth of their son, Weston, in October 2025. She teaches at Sour Lake Elementary School in Hardin-Jefferson school district, and they live in Lumberton.

Jacob Osbourne '24, B.S. computer and information sciences, is a process computer systems analyst at Indorama Ventures. He lives in Groves.

Rifat Parveen '24, M.E. mechanical engineering, is an engineering associate

with the Kansas Department of Transportation and lives in Hutchinson, Kan.

Alondra (Flores) '24, B.S. political science, married Octavio Ruiz in August 2025. They live in Groves.

Sullivan Spell '24, B.S. interdisciplinary studies, teaches in Nederland school district and is assistant cheer coach for Nederland High School. She lives in Nederland.

Ensign Joshua Tindel '24, B.S. nursing, is a registered nurse with the Navy. He lives in Oceanside, Calif.

Hannah Gbadebo '25, Au.D. audiology, is an audiologist with Baylor College of Medicine's Jamail Specialty Care Center. She lives in Dallas.

Dallas filmmaker **Julian Jordan '25**, B.S. communication, released his self-made documentary, *Real Life*, last summer. He lives in Dallas.

Rafin Shahiduzzaman Rabbi '25, M.E. electrical engineering, is a data center engineering operations engineer with Amazon AWS. He lives in Mishawaka, Ind.



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GOLD: GRADUATE OF THE LAST DECADE

Valeria Perez: Veterinarian in the making

by SARAH PARKER

Like many young children, Valeria Perez '20, wanted to be a veterinarian when she grew up. While for most this noble career goal is a passing fancy born of a child's love for animals, Perez has never wavered in her passion for veterinary medicine and has been actively working towards making her childhood dream a reality since middle school.

"Vet school has been the plan since I was little," Perez said. "I don't remember an exact age, but I think it became more serious in seventh grade when I started to research and look into shadowing at clinics and seeing what it takes to get into vet school. I told my art teacher [what I wanted to do], and she put me in contact with the veterinarian at the Spurlock Road Veterinary Clinic."

Perez began shadowing at the Nederland-based clinic during her freshman year of high school and eventually landed a job there as a kennel assistant while in college. This real-world work experience reinforced Perez's drive and taught her that her desire to become a vet goes deeper than her love for animals.

Perez said she always knew she would be helping animals, but her work helping the humans who come along with them turned out to be every bit as rewarding.

"The helping people aspect really solidified my love for vet med. It started off with a love for animals, but it developed into wanting to help people through their animals. In Nederland, there's a big Spanish-speaking community, and I was able to help that community as well."

Having a clear picture of what she wanted to do with her future made taking the steps to get there more certain. Selecting Lamar University for her undergraduate studies was an easy choice. Perez's elder brother, Javier Cabanillas '13, B.A. political science, is an alumnus and had given her a good impression of the university.

Attending Lamar gave Perez the opportunity to stay close to her family and the Spurlock Road Vet Clinic, while preparing her to succeed in vet school at a more affordable cost. Perez received



two scholarships, the Charles & Susan Gordon & Julia Gordon Gray Memorial Scholarship and Viona E. Long Scholarship in Biology.

"The biggest factor for me was staying close to home because I knew I was going to have to move away for vet school eventually. I loved [Lamar]. I really did. [The professors] would be able to recognize my face going in, and that was a really big part that I enjoyed."

During her time at Lamar, Perez was involved in a range of extracurricular activities, including serving as a Lamar Ambassador. She also helped establish P.A.W.S. (Passion of Animal Welfare for Students), a student organization dedicated to the welfare and care of all animals. P.A.W.S. also works to create opportunities for pre-veterinary students and animal lovers of all majors to get involved in animal-related education and outreach on campus and within the greater Southeast Texas community.

After graduating from Lamar, Perez was accepted into Ohio State University's College of Veterinary Medicine, one of the top five U.S. programs. "I would recommend for anyone who wants to pursue pre-vet that Lamar is a great choice. You don't need to go away to the vet school's undergrad. I had more opportunities [for vet school] than I ever thought possible."

Perez said the strong relationships she built with Lamar professors gave her the confidence she needed to succeed on the larger Ohio State campus. "It felt routine to walk up to the [Ohio State] professors and ask questions without feeling scared. That's something that's been very important throughout my years at vet school."

Perez is now in her final year of the four-year program with plans to graduate in May 2026. "It feels very surreal," she said. "I can't believe I'm done already. I would not have survived undergrad; I would not have survived vet school without my family. They have been more than supportive, and I will never be able to thank them enough. I hope to graduate and keep making them proud."